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the weekly Standard

AUGUST 19, 1996

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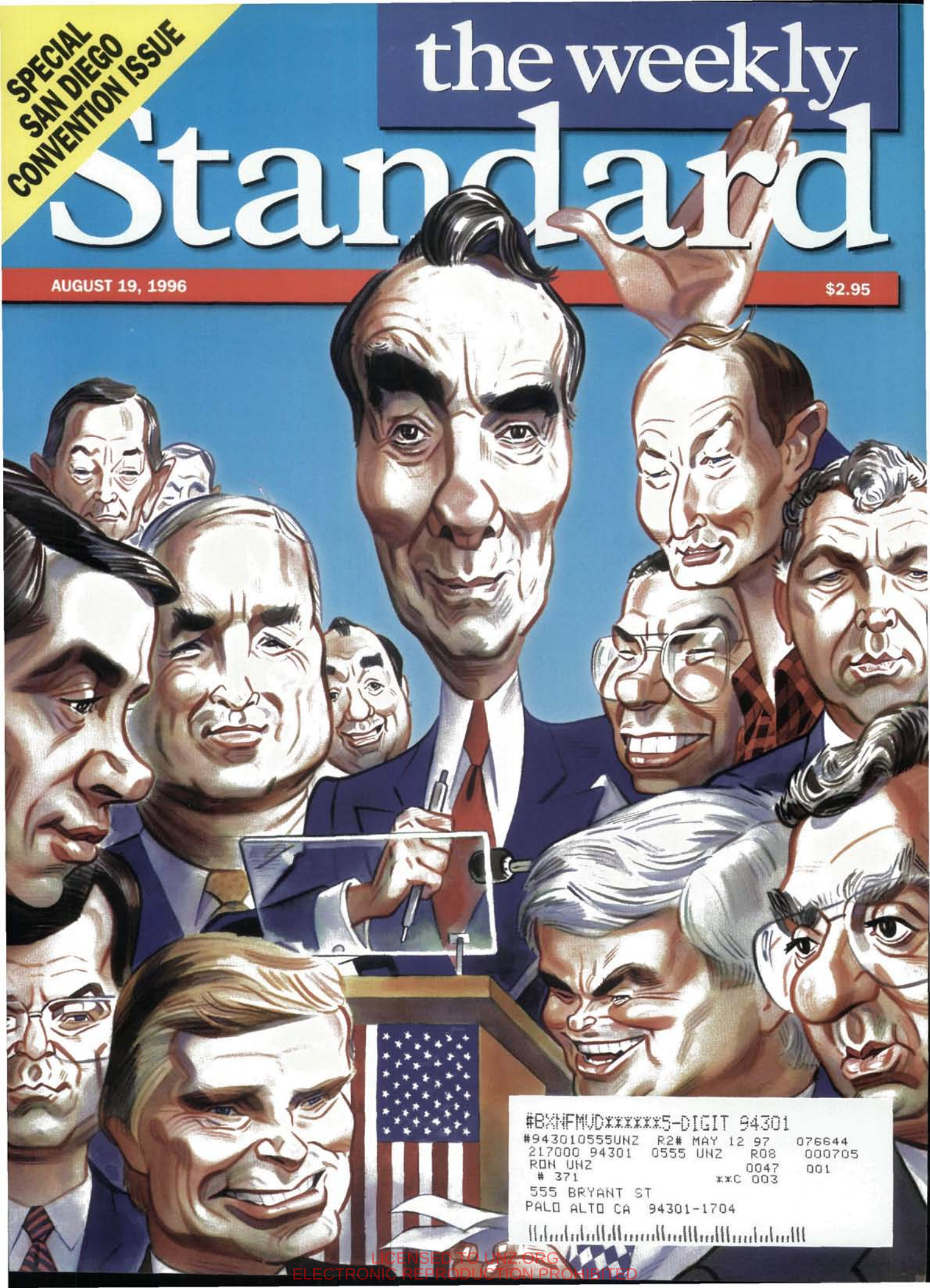

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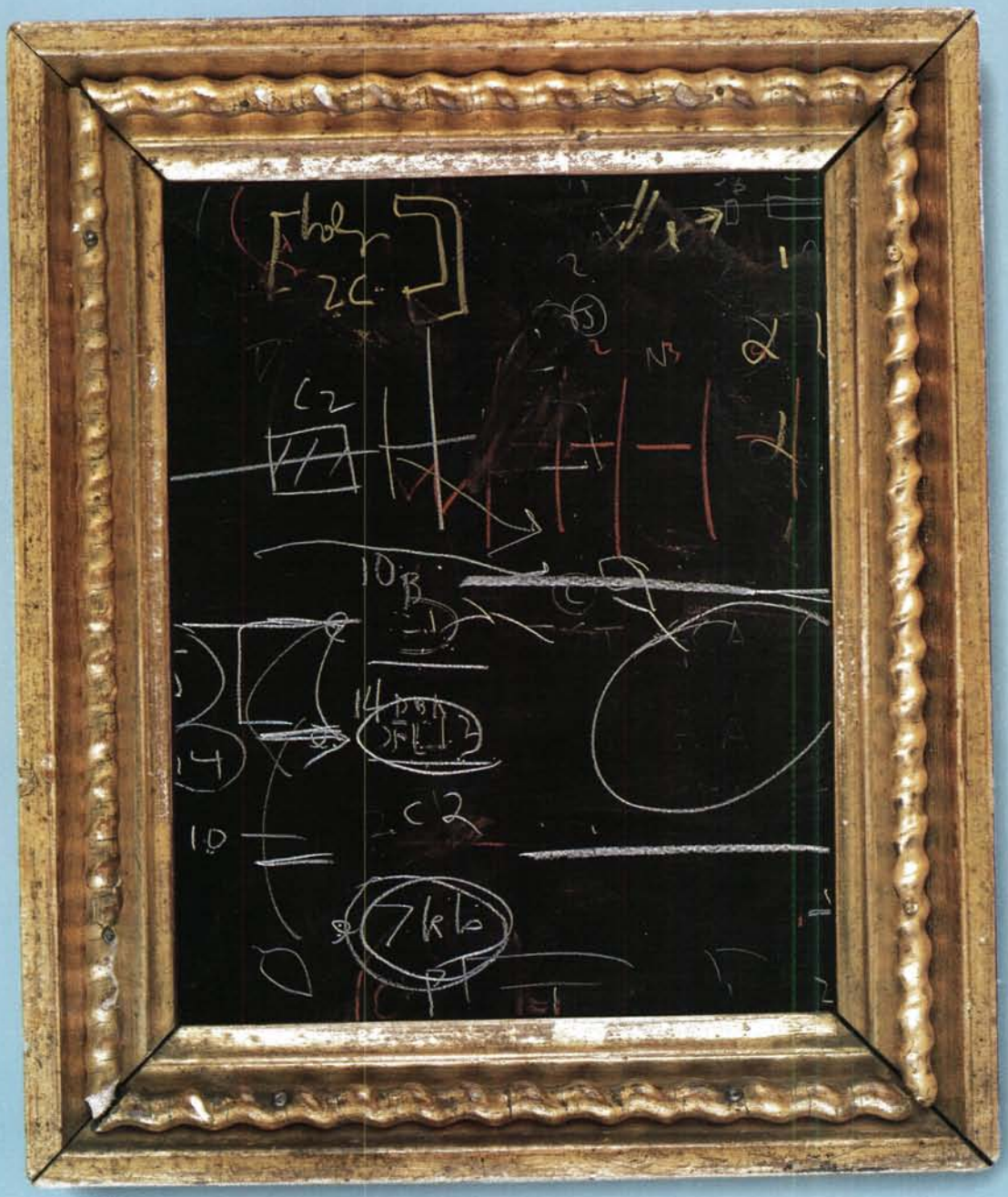

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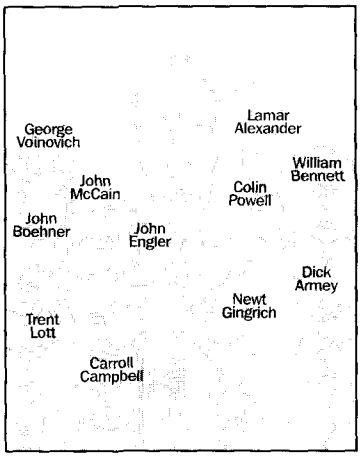

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He Didn't Inhale, But Americans Are

The so-called war on drugs was ever-present during the 1980s but seems to have disappeared from the public-policy radar screen in the 1990s. Turns out that is a very, very bad development; this is one area where eternal vigilance is clearly called for, especially when you consider just how bad things are getting. Two as-yet unreleased Health and Human Services reports on drug use indicate how severe the national drug problem is.

The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse shows overall teenage drug use has increased by 78 percent from 1992 to 1995—24 percent from 1994 to 1995 alone. Ten percent of teens now use drugs on a monthly basis, with monthly cocaine use up a horrifying 166 percent between 1994 and 1995. Marijuana use: up 105 percent since 1992, 37 percent since 1994. Monthly use of LSD/hallucinogens: up 183 percent since 1992, and rising 54 percent between 1994 to 1995.

The second HHS report indicates spiraling growth in the number of hard-core drug addicts. According to the Drug Abuse Warning Network report, emergency-room visits related to heroin rose 19 percent between 1994 and 1995 and 58 percent from 1992 to 1995. Marijuana/hashish-related visits: up 17 percent from 1994 to 1995 and 96 percent since 1992. Cocaine-related visits: up 19 percent since 1992.

If this isn't a campaign issue, we don't know what is.

Whitewater: The Jury's Still Out

The conventional wisdom in Washington is that Whitewater's dead, at least for this election season. White House aides are elated at a Little Rock jury's acquittal of two Arkansas bankers on four felony counts. Deputy counsel Bruce Lindsey, reportedly the president's closest friend in the White House, had been an officially designated "unindicted co-conspirator" in an alleged conspiracy to conceal large cash withdrawals by Bill Clinton's 1990 gubernatorial campaign. But Lindsey's principal accuser, Neal T. Ainley, bombed during testimony, and several jurors told reporters that none of them believed Ainley at all.

End of story? Hardly. According to the *New York Times*, the Whitewater jurors didn't trust Lindsey, either. One of them, Mary M. Zinamon, told the *Times* that Lindsey's testimony "was the same as Ainley's." She "didn't believe a thing [Lindsey] was saying" because it "just didn't make sense." Another juror, Betty I. Sweeden, said *none* of the jurors believed Lindsey. And *USA Today* now reports that jurors say they would have convicted Lindsey of conspiracy had *he* actually been on trial.

Now attorneys in the Whitewater prosecutor's office are telling people they will consider issuing new indictments as late as the end of September—for almost another two months, in other words—before suspending public activity during the presidential election. They have hired another prosecutor to look at the behavior of Lindsey and other White House staffers. And they have designated a prosecutor in Little Rock to focus on Mrs. Clinton's pre-Washington activities. Convicted Whitewater felon James McDougal, *USA Today* reveals, "has been talking to Whitewater prosecutors in advance of his sentencing."

Once again, the conventional wisdom may prove to be wrong.

Feet of Clay

Clay Chandler is a reporter covering economic policy for the *Washington Post*—a position held throughout the 1980s by the late Hobart Rowan, the legendary scourge of Reaganomics. Even when he pretended to be merely a reporter, Rowan made it clear in his dispatches that tax cuts of any kind were a sin against man and God, and Chandler is providing the same service for *Post* readers in 1996. In early June, he published an opinion piece in the paper's Outlook section whose gist is covered in the headline: "Between You and Me, Mr. Dole . . . Beware Those Tax Cutters and Their Budget-Busting Bill of Goods." Alas, Dole ignored Chandler's sage advice. The reporter retaliated with a "news story" last week, the day after Dole announced his tax cuts. Headline: "Economists Question Dole's Plan." In an amazing coincidence, Chan-

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Scrapbook

dler's news story precisely replicated his opinion piece. We find this implicit tribute to the ghost of Rowan touching, but now that Chandler's hostility to Dole's economic plan has been so openly declared in the opinion pages, shouldn't the *Post*'s editors assign someone else to cover it in the news pages?

Ed Rollins Screws Up Again

Republican political consultant Ed Rollins appears on the cover of his new memoir, *Bare Knuckles and Back Rooms*, wearing suspenders, tie, and—on his raised dukes—boxing gloves. In the book's first hundred pages, he talks endlessly about his teenage boxing career. But Ed, isn't "bare knuckles" when you take *off* the gloves?

Iran 1, Great Satan 0

The Olympic Games reassured us of one thing: The Iranian government has not lost its rhetorical touch. After an Iranian wrestler won the gold medal in the 198-pound class, President Hashemi Rafsanjani—was he one of the moderates?—praised him for "rubbing the nose of America in the dirt." The thing is, the wrestler had beaten a Russian opponent in the final, "despite all the mischief by the Americans to prevent this historic event in Atlanta." "The flag of the Islamic Republic of Iran," Rafsanjani said, "was raised in the House of Satan." Something tells us that the shah, upon his peacock throne, would have been much more gracious—and that the Games in Teheran wouldn't be a whole lot of fun. Go get 'em, Great Satanists!

Teecherz Stinc (Pas It Ahn)

Another nice example of now-you-see-it, now-you-don't school reform comes to us from the Golden State. California instituted teacher testing 13 years ago, and with it an implicit pledge to the public that their children's teachers would be able to read, write, and do math at least as well as someone who had finished the 10th grade. Not exactly an exclusive requirement, but progress over the former laissez-faire regime.

In the past, it was known that some who failed or didn't take the test, called CBEST, were granted waivers (that's in addition to the thousands of teachers grandfathered in when the tests began). Now for the first time, the number of waivers has been published: 1,082 in the state last school year, with some districts (like giant Los Angeles) requesting next to none, while others binged (much smaller San Francisco requested 59).

Even with the escape hatch of waivers, of course, insisting on 10th-grade competency is too much for the leading teachers' union. The California Teachers Association wants the test done away with. Why even pretend to guarantee that public school teachers are almost as capable as high school graduates?

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Casual

The Bob Dole Fan Club

As the presidential campaign enters its final phases, I'm struck by something I didn't expect to get struck by: Everybody likes Bob Dole!

This is not strictly true, of course. If you look at the polls, you'll notice that actually a lot of people don't like Bob Dole at all, and even more are simply indifferent to him. But the roster of the Bob Dole Fan Club (official motto: "Aaaaarrrgh . . . whatever") contains some unexpected names.

President Clinton, for one, expresses his undying admiration for Bob Dole whenever anyone asks, and often when anyone doesn't. He can be almost poetic on the subject, discoursing on the drama of the Republican nominee's life, first as a child of the Depression sixty years ago, then as a soldier in a war that ended more than fifty years ago, and then in the Congress beginning way, way back at the close of the Eisenhower era. The president never fails to mention Dole's "long public service"—emphasis on the "long." *Decades* of service. Centuries! The listener is left thinking that only Methuselah, or maybe Strom Thurmond, could have served longer. This is the tone of corporate testimonial dinners, when an honored employee is at last put out to pasture for whatever little time remains to him. If Dole loses the election, the president will be inconsolable.

Leon Panetta is another big Dole fan—or he was until Dole decided to cut everybody's taxes. This, Panetta said on one talk show after another, was a betrayal of the real Bob Dole, the Bob Dole whom Leon himself had admired so slobberingly during the great congressional budget-balancing wars of the 1980s. Dole had always been a responsible fellow, but now had undergone "a major reversal," Panetta said, after "*thirty-five years*" of trying to balance the budget. (*Thirty-five years*! The guy must be ancient!) Leon's disgust was almost palpable. You got the idea that if Dole doesn't renounce the tax cuts immediately, Panetta might just vote for Clinton.

Believe it or not, there are even Dole fans outside the Clinton White House. One of the more remarkable pieces of journalistic Dole-iana came from Andrew Sullivan in a recent *New Republic*. Sullivan used to be the editor of the magazine, which used to be the flagship of the intellectual wing of the Democratic party, which used to have an intellectual wing, and so he is not, perforce, the sort of guy you would expect to find warbling the praises of the Kansan conservative. When it comes to popular culture, most of us think of Dole as . . . well, sort of old and out of it; his favorite band, after all, is Glenn Miller's. But Sullivan improbably tags Dole as the perfect candidate for Generation X—"someone whose ironic detachment, bleak humor and occasional bursts of dark sentiment make him far more intelligible to the under-35 crowd than most politicians."

Sullivan's argument is hard to follow, but he seems to be referring to Dole's inability to stop cracking wise about the absurdities endemic to election campaigns, particularly the candidate's habit of finishing incomplete sentences with his famously dismissive "whatever." ("That's one way to address it," Dole has said, "whether you're white, black, whatever.") Sullivan finds this an appealing sign of ironic detachment; others may consider it annoying evidence of intellectual sloth. Whatever. Sullivan's flattery of Dole, like Clinton's and Panetta's, is easily translatable into practical campaign advice. Clinton and Panetta advise a return to good old constipated Republicanism. Sullivan's counsel is more succinct: Stay clueless, Pops.

But the biggest Dole fan that I can think of is—perhaps appropriately—dead. Richard Nixon continues to offer his protégé advice in a new book, *Nixon Off the Record*, a series of uncensored reflections transcribed by an aide during the former president's logorrheic final years. Here we see the freewheeling Nixon, his mind ranging widely over matters political, diplomatic, and personal. It makes for unpleasant, not to say revolting, reading.

Like Clinton and Sullivan and Panetta, Nixon "admired" Dole for reasons that are hard to regard as disinterested. Nixon liked Dole because he reminded him of another politician of humble origins, one despised by the liberal media but who nevertheless was tested time and again in the cauldron of adversity. The author paraphrases the former president: "A vote for Dole would be a vote for a smart, savvy, responsible moderate . . . " and then the ominous afterthought—"not unlike Nixon himself." And of course there's the wise counsel: Dole, said Nixon, "can be a warm, funny guy. That should come across more. We had that problem."

They certainly did. And so another Dole fan offers a word of advice, this one from beyond the grave. Be warm. Be funny. Like Nixon.

With friends like these . . .

Andrew Ferguson

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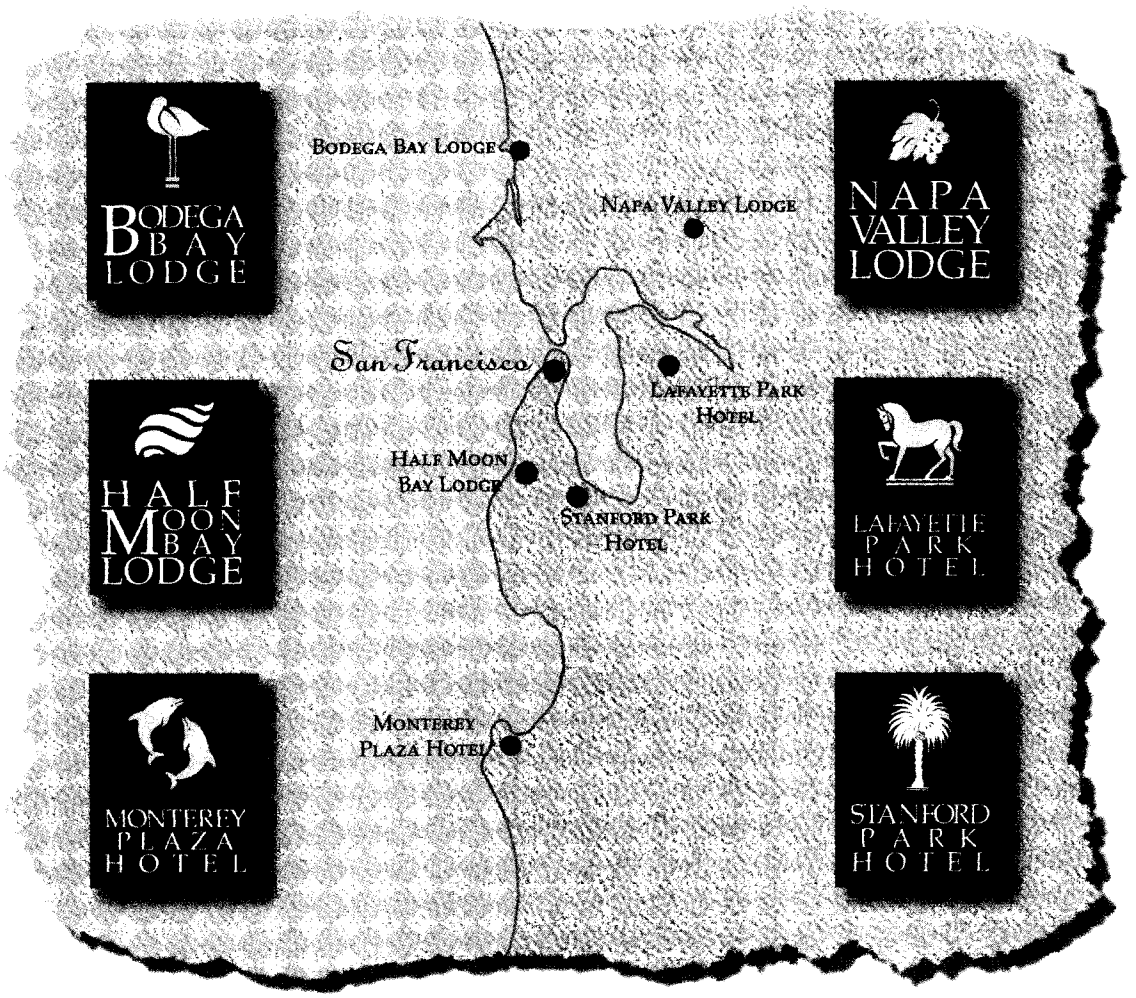

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Rocking the Conservative Boat

According to Diana West ("Against Conservative Cool," Aug. 5), when rock 'n' roll came along, "rhythm obliterated melody, . . . sexuality overwhelmed romance, . . . emotions were gutted, . . . popular taste was infantilized, [and] a cultural condition was created that now has its expression in gangsta rap and other pop excrescences."

Really? So Ray Charles had no sense of melody, yet Bing Crosby was a musical genius? Buddy Holly didn't know the meaning of romance? The Beach Boys gutted emotions? The songs of The Who were juvenile compared with Pat Boone? Bruce Springsteen is more immoral than Frank Sinatra?

West buys into the argument that rock 'n' roll belongs to the Left. Actually, if rock 'n' roll can be said to have any political ideology, it is a conservative one: Musical excellence is the result of talent and hard work without special preferences for race or gender. The Beatles and Charlie Parker weren't master musicians because they were poor or black, but because they spent twelve-hour days practicing. The resulting excellence, the excellence of *sound*, helped jazz, swing, and by extension rock 'n' roll play a small part in bringing the races together.

Today, rock 'n' roll is rife with the kinds of excesses West documented. Yet it also offers honest, talented, remarkable bands that are more interested in making great music than toppling the government or getting girls.

MARK GAUVREAU JUDGE
POTOMAC, MD

I am puzzled by Diana West's damning of "rock 'n' roll culture" in her recent essay.

While rock 'n' roll musicians tend to be outlandishly liberal, rock 'n' roll music and lyrics are for the most part harmless and apolitical. Contrary to Ms. West's beliefs, Republicans can listen to rock 'n' roll, hang out with rock 'n' roll musicians, even visit the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland without being transformed into liberal foot soldiers.

Thank God people like Bill Bennett and Rush Limbaugh love rock 'n' roll. With Bob Dole at the microphone, we need all the conservative cool we can get.

PETER MCCALLUM
NEW YORK, NY

I thought Diana West's article was mean-spirited and essentially wrong. She is mistaken to liken the rock music of the 50s and most of the 60s to what gets listened to now. Songs like "Up On the Roof" or "Wonderful World" or "I've Just Seen the Face" or "Be My Baby" may not be the equal of those by Gershwin or Kern. But they are wonderful to listen to and created an infectious sense of joy, at least for some of us.

PETER CONNOLLY
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Diana West was right on target. She's right to point out that it doesn't matter how many Republicans are elected to office if the Republic's standards are still set by the Jerry Garcia Fan Club.

LARRY THORNBERRY
TAMPA, FL

Diana West's piece is reminiscent of the reaction to Allan Bloom's comments on music in *The Closing of the American Mind*. Conservatives who insist that standards of judgment apply in all other matters found themselves insisting with equal vigor that in this one area, music, it is more or less a matter of taste.

Perhaps because popular culture is as pervasive as air, we rarely take it seriously enough. Cool conservatives need to consider the possibility that their lack of discrimination reveals deep weaknesses in their understanding of politics and culture. If Bill Bennett and Bill Clinton listen to the same music, should we wonder that the former has not prevailed against the latter?

MITCHELL MUNCY
DALLAS, TX

Diana West hit the nail on the head in her analysis of American conservatism's bizarre embrace of the counterculture and its music. She did not, however, go far enough. The Right does not merely accept contemporary popular culture. It eventually accepts and endorses every political and social initiative of its adversaries. This is why today's conservatives celebrate the causes and leaders whom previous conservatives denounced. The *National Review* of today would be horrified by the stands taken by the *National Review* of the 50s on everything from civil rights to Joseph McCarthy. In the same way, 50s conservatives were frightened by those who still maintained the old conservative opposition to women's suffrage, the income tax, and the direct election of senators.

At present, with the Left having sunk to the unspeakable level of supporting abortion, "assisted suicide," and sexual perversion, the Right continues to compromise and retreat. Doubtless the Doles and Gingriches of a few decades hence will call for tolerance of whatever evil the Left will spew forth, perhaps incest or bestiality.

The source of the problem is that the "respectable" Right has no root principles and is therefore incapable of standing firm against leftist assaults. In their hearts, conservatives have accepted the Left's dogmas of egalitarianism, pluralism, "rights," and the whole gamut of terror words such as "sexism," "racism," and "homophobia."

With the exception of a small remnant that anchors itself in orthodox faith, and a smaller circle that is loyal to the identity of this civilization and its peoples, the American Right's ongoing retreat is its only distinguishable characteristic.

West concludes by correctly noting that the restoration of culture would require that the "defenders and promoters of ordinary American life . . . seek

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to understand what it is that has died." Sadly I'm afraid they do and rejoice at its passing.

RABBI MAYER SCHILLER
MONSEY, NY

SPEND WISELY ON DEFENSE

As for your editorial "Spend More on Defense" (July 29), a reckless throwing of money to achieve a strong defense is not the answer. Prudent spending of the 20 percent of the budget already allocated will achieve the result. We should place procurement on a more business-like basis and force individual services to complement, not compete with, one another.

It is a difficult job. A century of rivalries and unbridled spending has brought us to today's pass. A strong, versatile military is what the country needs, but without forcing military leaders to do more with what they have, we will only breed more waste, not strength.

J.H. RIGBY
LIVERPOOL, PA

JOE KLEIN & LEWIS CARROLL

I don't know Joe Klein. I haven't read his book. But I question Hadley Arkes's motivation for writing his piece much more than I do Klein's for his ("Primary Fictions," Aug. 5).

When we read fiction we must allow for a suspension of our disbelief. Arkes, on the contrary, seems to bring to his reading of *Primary Colors* a fierce will to believe that it's all true. It's thinly covered with a fictive wash, of course, but he can easily see through that. I hope he enjoyed it as much as he seems to have.

But at the risk of ruining that enjoyment, here's an alternative explanation of how the book got its start. There's Klein, covering the Clinton campaign, watching vivid personalities engaged in an intense effort. It's a wild environment, abounding with improbable stories and even more improbable events. And in the midst of this, in a burst of creative insight, Klein asks himself: What would happen, what would these people do, if I turned the improbability factor up a notch or two?

The book is the answer to that question. In a way, it's not so much a novel as it is a through-the-looking-glass fantasy. Remember, Lewis Carroll's stories reflected darkly and absurdly on the foibles of his time. In light of the furor that has erupted, perhaps Klein has accomplished something of the same.

M.K. BERRY
BETHESDA, MD

GREEN ACRES

Matt Labash ("RC, Booty, and Me," Aug. 5) may feel that living in Calvert County, Maryland, is a definite plus compared with Washington, DC, but perhaps he should do a bit more research. Chickens definitely do not leave chocolate boluses in a dog's dish. They just spread melted vanilla chocolate chip (with a hint of lime) ice cream everywhere they go most indiscriminately. Welcome to the country, Mr. Labash.

BOB WATERS
HARTFORD, VT

OLYMPIAN ADVERTISING

Yes, it was one wretched ad after another in the Olympics ("De-Olympicizing the Games," Aug. 5), but the Home Depot spot that Christopher Caldwell cited was not the worst of the batch. Another Atlanta company, BellSouth, deserves the honors for its spot with the introduction, "Southerners have always had a love affair with communication . . ." Is there some kind of purgatory for bad copywriters?

JAMES M. MCCOWAN
NEW YORK, NY

UP IN SMOKE

While we appreciate Eric Felten's wryness in skewering global-warming alarmists ("With A Bang, Not A Whimper," Aug. 5), it is hard to abide by his prescription—pump more (temporarily) cooling sulfates into the atmosphere to counteract the greenhouse gas warming. While the National Academy of Sciences panel did speculate on such "geoengineering" to save us from our potential self-immolation, few would sanction inflicting deliberate environmental damage.

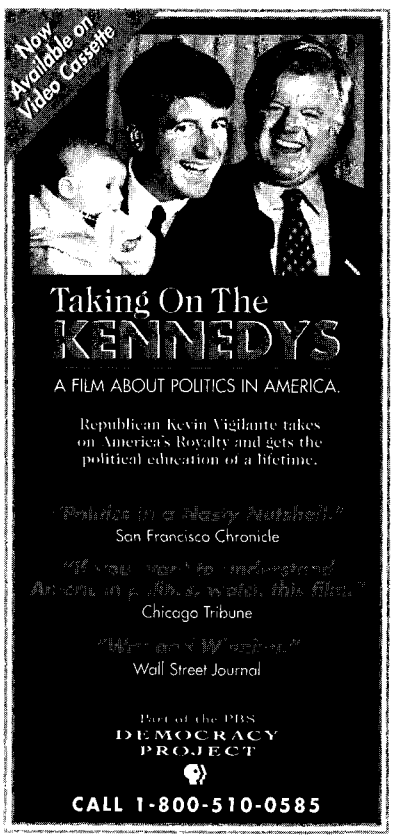
A similar debate surrounds climate. Our very complex, and poorly understood, interaction of atmosphere and ocean composes a system capable of dramatic, non-linear changes. Our first task is to accurately model this complexity and then determine the true problems caused by human industrial activity. Some form of global climate change is a probability. Human influence on climate is a possibility. Media hype and political pressure on scientific panels are a certainty.

We appear to have enough problems confronting us without calling for, quite literally, more smoke and mirrors.

DAVID MURRAY
WASHINGTON, DC

Eric Felten missed the point about the uneasiness surrounding "geoengineering." While I cannot speak for the people in his piece, I for one am not worried that it will work, but that it won't work as planned. Given the track record of social engineering and bioengineering, do we really want to volunteer as lab rats in the latest attempt to "engineer a better world"?

BRUCE WILSON
TEMECULA, CA



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The Clinton Deficit Reduction Plan
Another Arkansas financing scheme?

Your president might as well be financing the national debt with credit cards — that *is* the bottom line to his deficit reduction. He cut our long-term financing in half and shifted the debt to 70 percent fixed, five years or less, with 33 percent financed *one* year or less. Like a consumer in trouble, Clinton is now scrambling to cut interest costs after financing debt credit card-style.

Since 1993, short-term rates have nearly doubled, driving interest payments up 11 percent annually. Face reality — we are quickly becoming a banana republic. *We* cannot even meet the economic criteria imposed on *Russia* by the International Monetary Fund!

Solving the debt crisis should not be a partisan debate.

Even under Reagan, the budget was actually balanced between spending and revenue. The national debt doubled during those eight years *due to nothing other than interest expenditures*. If you put your money in the bank at eight percent compounded, you double it in less than 10 years. Despite Bush/Clinton tax hikes, the debt has doubled again. It's time we face the truth and stop trying to rewrite history for political purposes. The problem is serious, and it is more than just Medicare. Since 1950, the cumulative interest cost equals *68 percent of the total national debt*.

"It's the taxes, stupid."

Since Reagan's administration, revenue and spending have been balanced. Today, we collect nearly $100 billion more in taxes than we actually spend. The deficit has continued due *entirely* to interest expenditures. This is why deflation has emerged and economic growth has declined more than 50 percent.

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the weekly Standard

Keep It Simple, Senator

Life is complicated, and politics can be too. Shepherding legislation through Congress and managing a diverse political coalition are difficult undertakings that often require subtlety, indirection, even obfuscation. Those were the skills Bob Dole perfected in his years at the helm of the Senate. But some things are simple, even in politics. Presidential election campaigns are, at root, simple. It is Bob Dole's task over the next three months to make the 1996 election a simple one, for simplicity is the route to victory.

The media and the intelligentsia abhor the kind of simplicity we're talking about. Instead, they embrace complexity—a phony complexity that is often the sophist's (or the devil's) device to confuse the good and seduce the gullible. Indeed, phony complexity has become the stock in trade of contemporary liberalism. Liberals argue that welfare reform is very important—but of course no particular welfare reform is sufficiently nuanced and careful to earn their support. Liberals acknowledge that moral considerations are appropriate—but, they hasten to add, moralizing judgments are to be avoided. Shame is proper—but shaming any particular person or behavior is harsh and unfair. The era of big government is over—but adopting any measure that would actually lead to a smaller government would be simple-minded.

IT IS BOB DOLE'S TASK TO MAKE THE 1996 ELECTION A SIMPLE ONE. AS RONALD REAGAN LOVED TO SAY, MOST IMPORTANT CHOICES ARE SIMPLE, BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN THEY ARE EASY.

The phony complexity with which today's liberalism disguises its bankruptcy has, of course, been taken to a new level by Bill Clinton. In 1992, when it looked as though there was a real chance and a coherent agenda to resuscitate liberalism, Clinton's campaign was quite simple: "It's the economy, stupid." Four years later, with liberalism's hopes in shambles, the Clinton presidency has built on the wreckage an extraordinary construct—replete with internal contradictions and continual triangulations. In a word, the world of Bill Clinton is a world of complexity.

That is why Bob Dole's task over the next three months is to keep it simple. As Ronald Reagan loved to say, most important choices are simple, but that doesn't mean they are easy. It does mean that conservatism is unafraid to advance some reasonably simple basic prescriptions for society's ills. Obviously, intelligent conservatives are aware of all the difficulties and complications of political life; indeed, true conservatives still understand better than anyone else that social action has unforeseeable consequences. But conservatives know that underneath all the complications and difficulties are certain simple truths, truths that indicate the direction we ought to go. Setting a general course for the ship of state is fundamentally simple, even though figuring out how exactly to get to the destination can be complicated.

It is no accident, therefore, that conservatives tend to prevail when they succeed in posing the most straightforward choice they possibly can to the voters. It is no accident that liberals desperately try to avoid allowing the voters to see such a choice. Bob Dole has a chance this week to lay out, in a reasonable and straightforward way, the simple choice this November's election offers. If he does so, and if he does it well, he can win. If, however, the whole election campaign over the next 12 weeks is conducted in a miasma of phony complexity—Bill Clinton's natural element—then Dole will lose.

Dole can frame the campaign around three basic issues: money, morality, and manliness.

Money. As for money—in other words, taxes and the size of government—Dole got off to a good start last week. He must continue to pose the choice between Clinton and himself as follows: *If you think the*

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current level of taxation and the current size and scope of government are about right, vote for Clinton. If you think that we should pay less in the way of taxes and the government should spend less, vote for Dole. Simple. And true.

Morality. Dole needs to tell his fellow citizens that if they think 1.5 million abortions a year is fine, that racial preferences are just, and that all patterns of family life are morally equivalent, then they should vote for Clinton. If they want to reduce the number of abortions, treat individuals fairly, and believe in traditional morality, then they should vote for Dole. Simple. And true.

Manliness. Finally, Dole needs to present himself to the country—his virtues and his failings, his strengths and weaknesses, his struggle to overcome adversities—and ask the voters to contrast his character and leadership with Bill Clinton's. Simple. And meaningful in ways that go beyond politics.

These are real contrasts, and they constitute a legitimate basis for a serious election campaign over the next three months. At the Republican convention on Thursday night, when Bob Dole delivers his acceptance speech, tens of millions of Americans will see him for the first time for more than just a few moments and will hear him for longer than a soundbite. Dole should make his case straightforwardly and make the choice clear; he and his advisers should then be willing to brave the slings and arrows of all those in the media who will accuse them of being "simplistic." If he does this, Dole can engage Clinton in the last great battle of his political life, crown himself with glory, and complete the Republican revolution that was begun with such breathtaking simplicity by Ronald Reagan in 1980. ♦

THE COMMA WAR OF 1996

by Tucker Carlson

San Diego

MIDWAY THROUGH THE OPENING DAY of the Republican party's platform committee meetings, Gary Bauer and Ann Stone met in the hallway to talk, and the encounter between the Christian conservative and the pro-choice activist drew a crowd of reporters. As the two spoke in intense but earnest tones—"Things have gotten so nasty," lamented Stone—a photographer snapped a series of pictures. Almost instantly the conversation ended. "Thanks," said the photographer. Sure thing, said Stone and Bauer, who proceeded to walk off in different directions without saying goodbye to each other.

What had appeared to be an important tête-à-tête was in fact merely a photo-op, a scripted news event arranged for the convenience of professional journalists on deadline. It was, in other words, little different from last week's controversy over the GOP's abortion plank itself. Propelled onto front pages around the country by reporters who must have known better, the fight over abortion that took place in the platform committee hearings would not, in all likelihood, turn out to be very significant. Still, it's hard to blame reporters for blowing it out of proportion. There wasn't anything else to write about.

THERE ARE FEW EVENTS LESS SUITED TO NEWS COVERAGE OF ANY KIND THAN A PLATFORM COMMITTEE MEETING. THE REAL WORK AMOUNTS TO AN EXERCISE IN GROUP EDITING.

There are few events less suited to news coverage of any kind than a platform committee meeting. The real work of the committee amounts to an exercise in group editing, in which 100-odd delegates labor, over a number of days, to refine and perfect the draft of a platform whose essential points have been agreed upon long in advance. In 1984, one of the most heated debates concerned the placement of a single comma in the tax-reform plank. Twelve years later, the process has become, if anything, less scintillating. Amendments were offered to add or delete modifiers, capitalize letters, finesse grammar. In the subcommittee considering the plank on crime, an argument broke out over replacing the word "cops" with "law enforcement officials." A delegate from Minnesota explained that in his hometown, "cops" is considered derogatory. The debate raged.

Meanwhile, the congressmen, convention staff, and Dole advisers who oversee the process did their best to keep the delegates—mostly local Republican leaders from the 50 states—in line and moving forward. Often this meant squelching ideas that might

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play well at home but wouldn't pass national scrutiny, such as a plan offered by a New York delegate to give suspected terrorists abbreviated trials in military courts. ("We didn't stand for it in Nuremberg, we shouldn't stand for it now," he explained heatedly.)

Staffers present during the editing of the platform's foreign-policy planks were particularly frustrated by what they saw as ham-fisted meddling with their carefully crafted positions. In one section of the draft, the plank attacked President Clinton for doing nothing to stop the "persecution of Christians and animists" in Sudan. When a delegate protested that he had never heard of an animist, the wording was changed to "and others." At another point, a delegate moved to strike the word "supranational," claiming ignorance of its definition, and replace it with "international," a more easily understood, if very different, term.

Alterations like these may seem niggling (though Dole's foreign-policy staff didn't think so), but the delegates weighed them with all the gravity of a jury considering a capital murder case. "As America watches this debate this evening," began one delegate typically, unaware that his national audience consisted of perhaps a few hundred C-SPAN viewers.

After a couple of hours of such proceedings, it was no surprise when reporters began to seek out more colorful people to talk to, and that meant abortion partisans. Ann Stone was a particular favorite, not least because her pro-choice views made her politically palatable to many journalists. A break in the hearings on the second day found Stone relaxing on a couch in the lobby, four female reporters seated Indian-style on the floor at her feet. None of the reporters had a notebook or tape recorder in hand. For the moment at least, they weren't reporting, but listening, *absorbing*.

If journalists didn't seem particularly interested in the meat of the platform, neither did lobbyists. This year's platform contains comparatively few special-interest-driven pledges to help specific American industries. The reason: Many corporations figured it wasn't worth paying lobbyists to get the language inserted, since the platform isn't interesting enough to influence anyone in Congress. "This thing will have dust all over it in four days," predicted one observer. Moral: The price of good government may be boredom. ♦

World Wide Weber

by Matthew Rees

San Diego

Vin Weber is the invisible man of the Dole campaign. While he holds the lofty title of national co-chairman (along with 13 other people), he's little known outside conservative political circles and doesn't make a single appearance in Bob Woodward's campaign chronicle, *The Choice*. Yet Weber has quietly emerged as one of the three or four most influential advisers in the Dole campaign.

Last week's focus on tax reform and abortion underscored Weber's prominent role. A leading supply-sider during his 12 years representing a Minnesota district in the House, Weber was an early advocate of forgetting Dole's attacks on Steve Forbes's flat tax and making a comprehensive tax-relief package the centerpiece of the presidential campaign. To that end, he helped recruit a clutch of free-market economists to draft a pro-growth plan, then narrowed the group's purview to deciding between across-the-board tax cuts and repeal of the Bush/Clinton tax increases. Weber knows a lot about economics and, as a former elected official, spoke with authority on the political implications of the various options. "We wanted the entire GOP chorus saying 'Amen' to the Dole plan," says Weber, whose efforts culminated in the across-the-board tax-cut proposals announced on August 5.

On abortion, Weber has been the campaign's chief power-broker, mediating among and between pro-lifers and pro-choicers. When Dole remarked in June that he wanted the kind of tolerance plank in the platform that would satisfy pro-choice Republicans, it was Weber who soothed angry pro-lifers. And while neither side was totally satisfied with the outcome in San Diego, the staunchly pro-life Weber came out of the controversy unscathed. Ann Stone of Republicans for Choice said, "I think Vin's been fair," while pro-life activist Gary Bauer told me, "Dole would be better off taking more advice from Vin Weber and less advice from people who shall remain nameless."

The surprise isn't that Weber has assumed such a prominent role in a presidential campaign, it's that it's with Dole. During the 1980s, Weber and his House Republican allies (Newt Gingrich, Trent Lott, Connie Mack, and Jack Kemp) frequently sparred with Dole because of his objection to reducing marginal tax rates. Weber hadn't talked much with Dole since leaving

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Congress in 1992, but Dole called him in February 1995 and said he'd like to have him join the campaign. The call came shortly after Kemp announced he wouldn't run (Weber endorsed Kemp in 1988). Weber's decision to get involved despite his numerous other commitments (he's a lobbyist, vice-chairman of the conservative think tank Empower America, teaches at the University of Minnesota, and has two young daughters) was a belated thank-you to Dole, who had campaigned and raised money for him during his tough reelection fight in 1986.

Weber still isn't at the campaign full-time and still doesn't draw a paycheck from Dole, but that hasn't handicapped him. His relationship with campaign manager Scott Reed dates back to Reed's time as chief of staff to Kemp at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and when Donald Rumsfeld assumed a top position in the Dole operation two months ago, he insisted Weber be given a bigger role. Weber has also cultivated good relations with top Dole advisers Bob Lighthizer and Sheila Burke, both of whom turned out to be surprisingly receptive to tax cuts during the internal economic debate.

Most important, however, Weber has Dole's ear. "Because he's held elective office, Dole is more inclined to listen to him and trust him," says a campaign aide. Thus Dole went along with Weber and Rumsfeld's suggestion that he go to Hollywood with Bill Bennett and praise some of Hollywood's recent movies. Similarly, it was no coincidence that Dole's speech on education reform was delivered in Weber's native state.

In the event of a Dole victory, look for Weber to be offered a top cabinet or White House slot. Absent that, he's still thought of as a possible candidate for governor of Minnesota. And now that he has crafted a suitable compromise on abortion and helped produce a bold economic plan, his opportunities to influence policy and politics in the presidential campaign will only grow. That's good news for Dole. For the heretofore invisible Weber, once a finalist to replace David Gergen on the *MacNeil-Lehrer NewsHour*, it means he'll start getting more attention than he could have hoped for. ♦

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Tax Cuts: This Is Now

by Irwin M. Stelzer

Voodoo II! More discredited supply-side numerical magic! "Loony . . . irresponsible . . . incredible!" So says the team of Panetta and Tyson—that's Laura D'Andrea, not Iron Mike. The Clintonites consider Bob Dole's long-awaited economic plan, of which a $548 billion tax cut over six years is only a part, even less realistic than Ronald Reagan's. (Forget for a moment that Reagan produced the largest peace-time boom in America's history, with economic growth averaging about 4 percent annually and almost 20 million new jobs created.) Why even less realistic? Well, the Reaganites predicted that 20 percent of the lost government revenue caused by tax cuts would be made up as economic growth increased the flow of tax dollars into the treasury. Dole expects 27 percent back (his people having opted against more optimistic estimates). The Clintonites dismiss this estimate as wishful thinking on the part of a flip-flopping one-time budget balancer.

Although one is tempted to defer to Clinton's expertise when it comes to flip-flopping, the truth is that neither Dole nor his critics can do more than guess at the extent to which energies unleashed by the tax cuts will generate more rapid economic growth. What's more, history provides little guide to the impact that tax cuts in 1997 might have on the deficit. The Democratic argument that fiscal chaos will follow as certainly as did soaring deficits after President Reagan's tax cuts in the 1980s is simply misguided. That was then; this is now.

First, there's no Soviet Union to contend with. Reagan's tax cuts were enacted (with Bob Dole leading the charge in the Senate) at a time when it was necessary to spend hundreds of billions of dollars to restore America's defenses after they were parlously neglected by Jimmy Carter. Although a President Dole will certainly spend more on defense than would a reelected President Clinton, the increase would not be enough to interfere with the goal of balancing the budget by 2002.

More important, Reagan cut taxes in an entirely different political environment. The Democrats controlled Congress in 1981, when existing entitlements were considered sacrosanct and the hunt for new ones a sport likely to be rewarded by the voters. The public yawned when warned of the fiscal consequences of increased spending on social programs and was not yet fully aware that in the war on poverty, it was game, set, and match for poverty, with government programs the losers.

So although Reagan could rally support for his tax cuts—no political risk there—he couldn't get the Democrats to rein in social spending. Dole faces no such problem: Witness the fact that half the Democrats in the House and more than half in the Senate voted to end welfare as we know it, after which the president signed a bill that rejected his call for a $10 billion increase in welfare spending and instead hacked $55 billion from these programs over the next six years.

Thus, if Dole is elected, he will undoubtedly be working with a Congress amenable to rolling back the reach of the federal government, and both branches of government will have the backing of a public clamoring for less, rather than more spending. In short, Congress will have to live within its means and find some way of balancing the budget with less money coming in. Another Reagan pitfall avoided.

Better still, Dole is not relying solely on tax cuts to generate growth. His program includes a healthy dose of the deregulation that President Clinton has preached but his bureaucrats have refused to consider (witness the State Department's recent decision to fight for specific numerical ceilings on the emissions that it thinks, but cannot demonstrate, are causing global warming).

Finally, Dole will have something no president has ever had—the line-item veto. And here his much-derided legislative experience should stand him in good stead. He will know where the bodies are buried, where the pork is, and which slices of it can be eliminated at acceptable political cost.

He will know which seemingly inexpensive programs are likely to balloon in the infamous budgetary "out-years." And he will be in a position to cut the budgetary heart out of cabinet-level agencies he considers beyond re-invention, such as the Commerce and Energy departments.

In short, the odds are better that Dole's plan can achieve its dual goals of lower taxes and a balanced budget than they would have been in those years when different conditions compelled Dole to be skeptical that lower tax revenues would constrain the spending of Kennedy, Waxman, Gephardt, Rangel & Co. The late John Maynard Keynes, when criticized for changing a position he had espoused some years previously, replied, "When I find I am wrong, I change my position. What do you do, sir?" (or words to that effect). Dole might well paraphrase that remark by saying, "When circumstances change, I change my position to accommodate the new reality. What do you do, Bill?" As if we didn't know.

Which brings us to the only really serious question that can be raised about the Dole plan: Can the econo-

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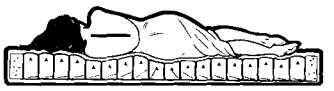

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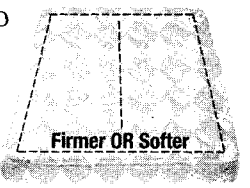

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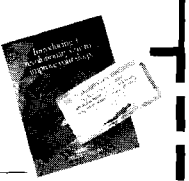

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my grow more rapidly than it has in the Clinton years without uncorking inflation? Some quite good economists contend that the economy is now operating so close to capacity that it just can't grow any faster without running into inflation-inducing bottlenecks. Other equally reputable academics disagree. The question is certainly worthy of the debate for which Republican Jack Kemp and Democrat Tom Harkin have been calling.

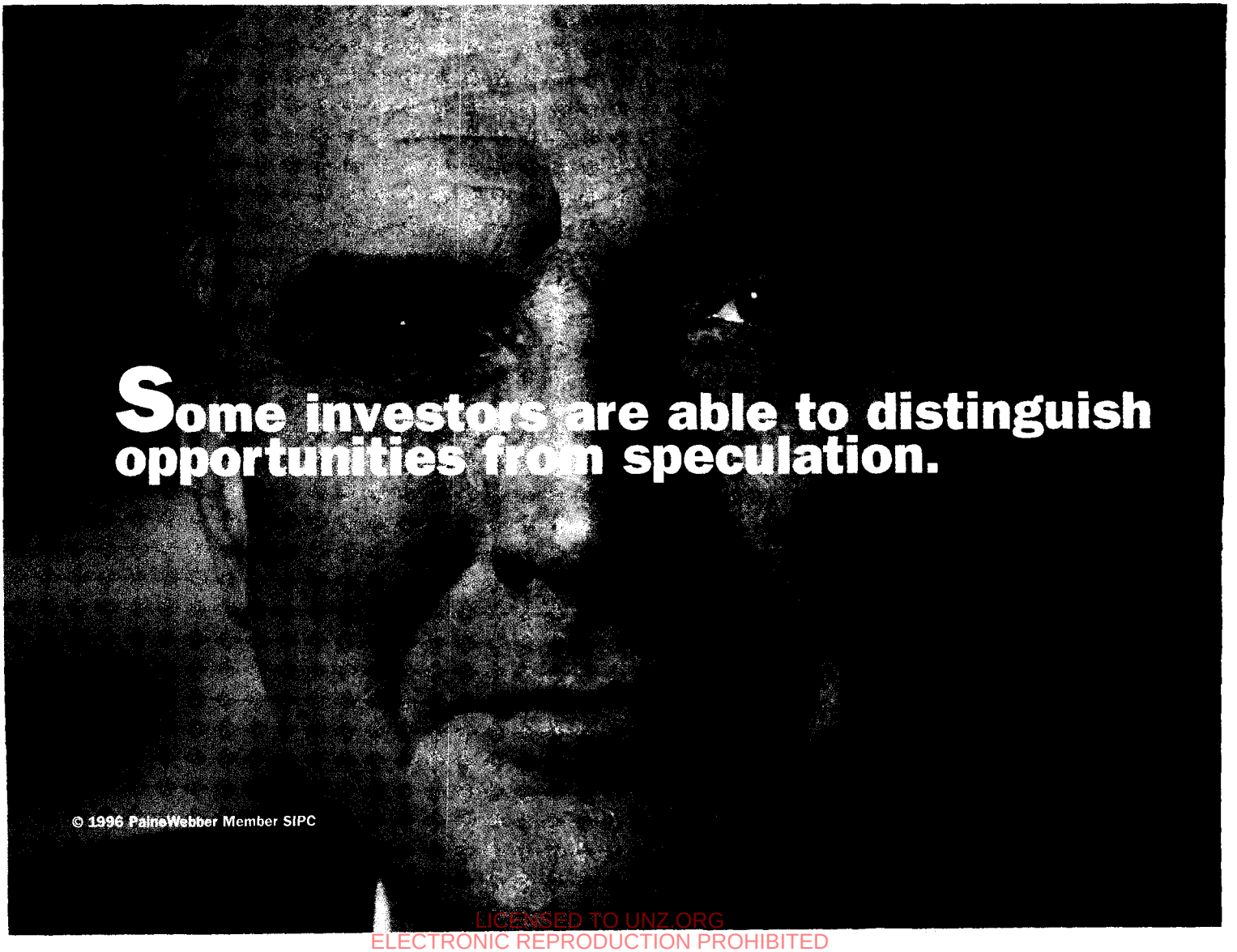
But the question cannot be answered by distorting the historical record. In its editorial rejecting the Dole plan the day before it was announced, the *New York Times* cautioned its readers not to leap to the conclusion that the plan might work from the fact that the Kennedy—and Reagan—era tax cuts did indeed stimulate growth.

"Those," we were informed, "were years of economic slack, when tax cuts can make sense. Now, the economy is operating near capacity." Oh, really?

President Kennedy committed himself to his tax cut in June 1962, when manufacturing plants were operating at almost 81 percent of capacity and the unemployment rate was 5.5 percent. Dole's suggestion comes at a time when manufacturing plants are operating at 82 percent of capacity and the unemployment rate is 5.4 percent. When Reagan's cuts were enacted, plants were running at 80 percent of capacity and the unemployment rate was 7.4 percent.

So Dole is no more of a gambler with inflation than was the sainted JFK, whose policies rewarded his successor with a 5 percent growth rate. Indeed, Dole has proved himself a bit more daring than Reagan—which he can afford to be, given the end of the Cold War and the public's new support for cuts in entitlement programs.

The only sensible answer to the question of whether Dole's cuts are consistent with more rapid non-inflationary growth seems to be "Yes, *if* . . ." *If* the day of ever-expanding entitlements is truly over. *If* Americans, with the carrot of being allowed to keep more of their own money and the stick of reduced government support, work harder and smarter and retire



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later (as Harvard's Dale Jorgenson predicts they will). *If* tuition vouchers are introduced to raise educational levels and thereby increase productivity. *If* regulations that are not cost-effective are repealed, relieving businesses of billions in wasted outlays. *If* the social fabric can be rewoven sufficiently to bring down the cost of crime and welfare. *If*, in short, Bob Dole is elected.

Irwin M. Stelzer is director of regulatory policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

GAY-ED FOR TOTS

by Debra J. Saunders

THE SAN FRANCISCO Unified School District has a lesson plan for teaching kindergartners and first-graders about homosexuality. It is called "My Family" and is disseminated through the district's Support Services for Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Youth Department.

Karen Hart, who works for the department, explained that "My Family" is about "validating all kinds of families that are within the school district." She added, "All children have a right to be validated within their existence."

The lesson provides definitions that are politically correct—and downright confusing to adults, never mind kids. Homosexuals are "people of the same sex who have feelings for one another in a romantic way." A family is "a unit of two or more persons, related either by birth or choice, who may or may not live together, who try to meet each other's needs and share

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common goals and interests." Sounds like a caucus to me.

The lesson includes class exercises designed to reinforce the notion that all families should be validated—presumably including families with no dad, three dads, or a 14-year-old mom.

This year the Buena Vista Alternative School went beyond "My Family." As it had done in past years, the school invited gay parents into classrooms to talk to elementary students. In a first-grade class, a gay man read to the children the district-approved book *Gloria Goes to Gay Pride*. But this year, students also worked on a rainbow banner for the gay pride parade, and they did so during class time.

As a school missive explained, kindergartners "designed" the red strip, first graders the yellow, and so on up to fifth grade. The rainbow banner, the message boasted, "reflects the creativity, love and appreciation for diversity as expressed by the children of Buena Vista."

Missing from this diversity-appreciation equation, however, are parents who dissent, parents like Rose Cassidy, who did not believe the lesson was age-appropriate for her seven-year-old son. Cassidy had received school notices ("noticias," since the school is bilingual) reporting that the very active Gay/Lesbian Parents' Group was working on a gay pride banner, but she assumed that the work would occur after school. She was surprised when her son came home and told her about the gay man who had addressed his class and read *Gloria Goes to Gay Pride*. "Had I been given a choice," she said, "I would have pulled my son out."

Cassidy believes the school district should notify parents before such sessions, but Hart argued that as long as the gay or lesbian lecturer does not discuss sex, there is no need for parental notification. Buena Vista PTA vice president Julio Apont put an inclusive spin on the issue: He agreed that parents should be notified before their children work on banners, but he did "not want to single out the gay and lesbian banner to be the only one they have to be notified for."

Lynn Levin, of the Gay/Lesbian Parents' Group, said the school sent out a notice at the beginning of the year that informed parents there would be lessons about "different kinds of families" and provided parents with the opportunity to opt their children out. Cassidy said she never received it. "They so much want to inform children," Cassidy lamented. "Why not inform parents?"

Those who support pressing young children into making the gay banner have insisted there is nothing political about it or the city's gay pride parade. Instead, they have equated the gay pride parade with Martin Luther King Day. That Buena Vista's proselytizing, forced on kids who aren't old enough to think critically, might be the liberal equivalent of public school prayer doesn't compute with them. School prayer is different, Levin insists, because it's religious. But there are parents who believe homosexuality is a sin. Activists who respect diversity and value tolerance ought to recognize that "My Family" infringes on those parents' rights.

Nor do true believers seem to understand the invasive nature of "My Family" exercises, which instruct children to discuss their families in public.

And where is their common sense? Why inform children about sexual issues at an age when they are pre-sexual? According to Levin, sessions do not involve sexual discussion—and don't need to when speakers define homosexuals as people who have special feelings for members of their own sex.

While Apont and Levin both have said they want to listen to parents' concerns, Levin's real attitude came to light in a recent interview. After talking about the need for dialogue so that dissenting parents could understand her point of view, she said, "If there are people in the public schools who don't feel comfortable with [pro-homosexual school policies], then they shouldn't be in the public schools."

Dissenters, do not darken the doors of San Francisco's public schools. Surrender your children or go. Love it or leave it.

Levin and others have argued that children must be taught to be tolerant of homosexuality because young children call each other "faggot" in the schoolyard. It is not enough, they say, to punish those who use that word in school. The *raison d'être* of "My Family" is to induce pliant children to hold the views that Levin and company want them to hold.

The political focus of the San Francisco school board is unrelenting. Completely absorbed with engineering how children think, the board is criminally lax at improving what children know. Recently it renamed a school—again an elementary school—the Harvey Milk Civil Rights Academy, after the gay San Francisco supervisor who was slain in office 18 years ago. Board president Steve Phillips explained that the school's emphasis on civil rights would provide a "point of unity" for pupils.

Some citizens would rather they all could read. Black high school students' grade point average is 1.86 (out of 4.0). What good will love and tolerance and politically correct views on gay rights do children who don't have a prayer of landing a good job?

Debra J. Saunders last wrote for* THE WEEKLY STANDARD *about teacher testing in California.

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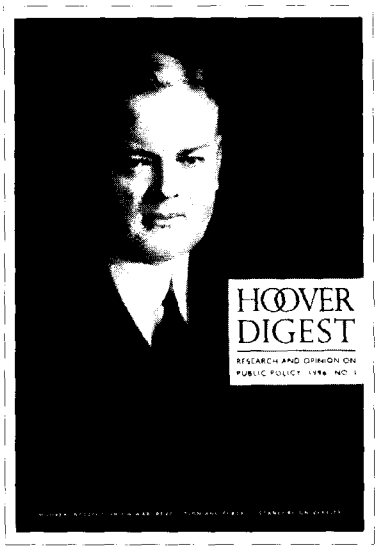

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The Conservative Revolution Marches On

By Fred Barnes

Watch the pen when President Clinton signs the Kennedy-Kassebaum health care bill in September. It may quiver. In January 1994, Clinton ostentatiously held up another presidential pen during his State of the Union address. "If you send me legislation that does not guarantee every American private health insurance that can never be taken away," he told members of Congress, "you will force me to take this pen, veto the legislation, and we'll come right back here and start all over again." Kennedy-Kassebaum enacts some health-insurance reforms but provides no such guarantee. Clinton intends to sign it anyway.

Liberal Democrats have tried to dress up the president's capitulation as a victory. Sen. Ted Kennedy claims Republicans "have decided that they need to pass Democratic initiatives before the election because their own record is too empty and too shameful to run on." Nonsense. Despite Kennedy's name on it, the bill is breathtakingly far from what Democrats really want. In fact, it's considerably narrower than even the most conservative legislation introduced by Republicans in 1994 when health care topped the national agenda. Yet Kennedy-Kassebaum cleared Congress only after mandated mental-health coverage, favored by liberals, was dropped and medical savings accounts, wildly popular among conservatives, were added.

CONSCIOUSLY OR NOT, BILL CLINTON HAS BECOME IN MANY WAYS A MORE CONSERVATIVE PRESIDENT THAN RONALD REAGAN.

The point should be obvious: The conservative revolution in America roars on. True, the Republican revolution has stumbled. The partisan realignment toward the GOP has halted (though it hasn't been reversed). Given the fickleness of politics, this isn't surprising, and it may be temporary. But what hasn't changed is the underlying ideological trend in the country, which is less prone to fits and starts. It's all the more conservative.

As a result, the debate in Washington (and more often than not in statehouses, too) has been transformed. The overarching question is not whether there should be a balanced budget, but whose version is better, congressional Republicans' or the one they extracted from Clinton. On Medicare, the issue isn't how to expand coverage but how to rein in spending. On taxes, the question is not whether to cut but how much and when. Before trashing Bob Dole's tax-reduction plan on CNN on August 4, White House economist Laura Tyson took pains to spell out tax cuts proposed by Clinton ("tax cuts for middle-income families, a child credit, a tax deduction for education and training, a whole scholarship tax credit . . . ").

Clinton, of course, has made heroic adjustments to the conservative mood, seemingly unaware of where he is heading. Consciously or not, he's become in many ways a more conservative president than Ronald Reagan. For all his popularity, Reagan never dreamed of de-entitling welfare and handing it over to the states—and cutting spending in the bargain. Yet Clinton has agreed to this and more (denying welfare to non-citizens, for example).

Reagan never came close to his cherished dream of a balanced budget. But Clinton, hectored by Republicans, has produced one that at least reaches balance after seven years—without a tax hike. And he's expected to submit another in 1997. As much as Reagan relished slashing federal spending, he never managed an absolute cut in real discretionary spending. This summer, Clinton and congressional Republicans agreed to one. Reagan trimmed around the edges of Medicare and other entitlements. But Clinton, while denouncing GOP entitlement cuts, has proposed far deeper reductions than Reagan. And if he's reelected, he's likely to propose even deeper cuts next year.

There's more. Reagan strongly supported prayer in school but did little to achieve it. Clinton issued an executive order to facilitate school prayer. Reagan complained about the content of movies and television shows (on weekends at Camp David, he screened 1930s and 1940s films). Clinton went further, jawbon-

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ing television moguls to establish a rating system for TV shows similar to the one for movies. My guess is Reagan looked fondly on school uniforms and curfews for teenagers, but he never said so. Clinton has made uniforms and curfews a major talking point in his speeches.

Okay, Clinton isn't sincere in lurching to the right. That's what's so telling about his makeover. In truth, he'd rather emulate Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson. His inclination is to beef up the federal government, create new antipoverty programs, and introduce fresh entitlements. But he's afraid to. He correctly gauges that the country is too conservative for any of that.

Poll after poll reminds him. On the central issue of the role of government, more than 60 percent of Americans now favor fewer services and lower taxes. Two decades ago, only 40 percent wanted less government. What's the biggest threat to America: big government, big business, or big labor? In 1979, 43 percent said big government; last year, 64 percent said so. Is government doing too much? In March 1993, 43 percent said yes. In January 1996, 58 percent said yes. On some conservative issues—the death penalty, balancing the budget, term limits—three-fourths or more of the public has been supportive for years. But on others, such as making English the nation's official language, backing has soared in the 1990s. "I can't think of anything that's changing in a liberal direction," says polling expert Karlyn Bowman.

The effect of all this on the 1996 election is palpable, and it goes beyond Clinton's embrace of conservative ideas. In Senate and House races, liberals are running as moderates, moderates as conservatives, and conservatives as *real* conservatives. Suddenly, Sen. Paul Wellstone of Minnesota, a noisy liberal seeking a second term, isn't so liberal anymore. Once a passionate foe of capital punishment, he recently backed the death penalty for terrorists. He voted against welfare reform in July, but he's declared in TV spots that he supports "workfare," though he's voted against it as well. Now, he's for term limits and against same-sex marriage. Wellstone contends he's not positioning himself toward the center but has simply modified some of this views based on what he's "learned from people."

In Virginia in June, moderate Republican senator John Warner won a primary battle against conservative Jim Miller by declaring himself a Reaganite. "He fought to rebuild America's military," a Warner TV spot declared, "and worked at Ronald Reagan's side to help end the Cold War." The ad also credited Warner with a "95 percent conservative coalition rating" and "common-sense conservative leadership." That tack doesn't always work. In Kansas, Sen. Sheila Frahm, a moderate appointed in June to fill Dole's seat, portrayed herself as a "conservative voice" in the August 6 primary. She lost to Rep. Sam Brownback, who's more conservative.

Not to be outdone, the Democratic platform has taken on conservative coloration. The draft text set for adoption at the Democratic convention in Chicago says: "We have worked hard over the last four years to rein in big government, slash burdensome regulations, eliminate wasteful programs, and shift problem-solving out of Washington." Guess what the platform says is the most powerful force to cope with national problems and create a stable future? It's "personal responsibility." By the way, the official agenda of congressional Democrats for 1997 is dubbed "Families First." Wonder where they got that idea?

Most Democrats have little credibility posing as moderates or conservatives. So the conservative undertow ought to further Republican realignment, adding a GOP president to Republican control of Congress. But realignments don't move in a straight line. In the heyday of liberal Democrats from 1932 to 1980, Republicans elected two presidents and captured Congress twice. Democratic presidents often faltered: Roosevelt in the second New Deal, Truman with various scandals, Johnson in Vietnam.

Chances are, Clinton will defeat Dole, and Republicans will hold the House and Senate. But scores of Republicans are vulnerable. Unlike Democratic members of Congress who withstood the reelection landslides of Richard Nixon in 1972 and Reagan in 1984, many Republicans are not entrenched. More than half the GOP House members have served only one or two terms. After failing to impose their program on Clinton last winter and suffering politically for trying, they've recovered a bit. In new polls by *Time*/CNN, Reuters, and the Pew Research Center, voters are evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats on whom they prefer for Congress. Earlier in 1996, Democrats had a nine-point advantage.

What Republicans lack this year is the very thing that spurred them in 1994: economic and social issues working in their favor. Pollster Fred Steeper concluded that social issues provided the biggest single impetus for Republicans in 1994. Now, many GOP leaders are leery of issues like abortion, gay rights, and quotas. "It's safer to talk about tax cuts and spending and balancing the budget," says Steeper. "There's unanimity [among Republicans]. On cultural issues, there's not as great a unanimity." For the realignment to advance, there needs to be. ♦

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Up from Libertarianism

By David Brooks

Just after the Republicans took over Congress, budget chairman John Kasich put out a hit list of 386 federal agencies slated for elimination. He said that Washington had become an "evil" city corrupted by special interests and bloated government. The idea was to remove government from large swaths of American life. But this July, the same John Kasich became a key co-sponsor, with Indiana senator Dan Coats, of a group of bills that *inserts* the federal government into large swaths of national life. The Coats proposal, called the Project for American Renewal, would use the tax code to encourage contributions to religious charities. It would encourage states to make divorce more difficult. There would be grants for adoption services and single-sex schools. "The fact that government programs have not worked is no excuse for those in government not to act," Kasich and Coats wrote in a *Washington Times* op-ed.

Kasich is no hypocrite; he'd still like to cut those agencies. But he has shifted his emphasis, and that shift perfectly captures the way many Republicans have reacted to the failures of 1995. The direct assault on the size of government was a flop, so they're looking for other approaches.

In 1995, the Republicans were filled with libertarian fervor. Activist Grover Norquist, who was white-hot during the first months of the Congress, explained that the Republican majority had been elected by the "Leave Us Alone" coalition—by people who simply wanted government off their backs. Norquist was quoted in a *Washington Post* profile saying that the sight of the executive branch buildings in Washington made him "physically ill. . . . Neo-American fascism, stuff that looks like Albert Speer designed it."

The Cato Institute was the most prominent think tank, with its experts testifying 16 times on Capitol Hill in the first month of the 104th Congress. Speaker Gingrich declared that his party would show "how to end programs, not just create them." The New Majority's *Zeitgeist* became so libertarian that mainstream Republicans emerged as aggressive opponents of . . . the FBI. For if Washington were incapable of running a good program, its law enforcement inevitably had to be overbearing and oppressive.

There was a positive hunger in those days for a budget train wreck; the fax machines spit out declarations from activist groups topped with slogans like "No Compromise." The Republicans were gambling that when they shut down the government, most Americans would discover they didn't mind. "Have you missed it?" Phil Gramm asked on *This Week with David Brinkley* during last winter's federal shutdown.

It turns out that Americans don't wake up angry because the Commerce Department exists. The shutdown gamble lost.

And ever since, Republicans have been trying to figure out what went wrong. The consensus, at least on Capitol Hill, is twofold. First, they had bad communications (blame Newt and House majority leader Dick Armey). And second, while they told people what they were against, they offered no positive alternative. "All that came across was that we wanted to lop off the government," GOP freshman-class president George Radanovich recently told David Broder. "We didn't make it clear we were equally committed to strengthening these other institutions and calling them to take responsibility."

The essential problem for libertarianism as a governing philosophy is that while this may be a country that distrusts government, it is still a youthful and melioristic nation. When things go wrong, people still look to government to do *something*. So Republicans have adopted a new strategy.

Put it this way: For decades, conservatives have told each other they can pursue libertarian means to achieve conservative ends. If you cut government, conservative social values will emerge to fill the gap left by government's departure, thanks to the conservative instincts of the American people. Now it seems the opposite may be true: Republicans have to use conservative means to reach libertarian ends. If you use political power in an attempt to strengthen civil society, build communities, and encourage personal responsibility, then you will have advanced a positive agenda. And then, and only then, will voters allow you to cut some government programs.

If, last winter, the language on Capitol Hill was all dollars and cents, budgets and forecasts, today the place has gone gooey with talk of families and communities, love and compassion. Kasich has said that Republicans need to "show the public more of their soul." (Kasich does attend Bible study and is called by one colleague a "maturing Christian," so he is thought to speak with some sincerity on this.) In June the

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Republican freshmen, led by Radanovich, released a "Vision Statement," which layered religious and civil-society thinking over the old Contract with America base. "We believe that reducing the federal government should not and cannot occur without a renewal of family, religious, civic, and business institutions in American society," the statement declared. Suddenly you can't walk down a hallway on Capitol Hill without hearing a Republican explication of Arianna Huffington's phrase "effective compassion." "If I were asked to reduce the problem to one word, that word would be 'compassion,'" says Pennsylvania Republican Curt Weldon, echoing the thoughts of many colleagues on the GOP failure. "The voters have to feel that you understand the plight of the working person in this country."

The actual policy suggestions to go along with the compassion rhetoric are more controversial. Newt Gingrich has been most visible lately championing a special tax deal to address urban blight in Washington, D.C. Gingrich appointed Weldon and Rick Lazio of New York as co-chairmen of his Anti-Poverty Task Force, from which perch they have proposed a $100 million *increase* in federal funding for the Community Service Block Grant program. Rep. James Talent of Missouri included new federal spending on abstinence education in the welfare reform bill. Talent and J.C. Watts of Oklahoma have produced an ambitious piece of legislation that is a grab-bag of pro-civil society, pro-character, anti-poverty efforts (Ways and Means chairman Bill Archer is said to have nixed the package on budget-busting grounds).

Sen. Coats's Project for American Renewal is the granddaddy of these efforts. The heart of the thing is a tax credit to strengthen private charities. Every dollar up to $100 you give to anti-poverty charities would be returned to you in the form of a tax credit. And for donations between $100 and $500, the government would rebate 75 cents on the dollar. Kasich vows to put the measure in the next budget. Dole embraced the idea this summer in a speech in Pennsylvania and tacked the Coats measure onto his economic package. Privately, several congressmen are skeptical of the charity tax credit, citing its cost and the possibility for abuse. Critics are keeping their mouths shut, though. They need *some* positive program to get them through the election, and this seems a sturdy ship for the storm.

The realpolitik argument for all this is that it offers Republicans a new way to appear compassionate. In the past, Republicans had to become timid liberals when they wanted to demonstrate they cared. They

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had to approve minimum-wage increases, increase food-stamp spending, and sign on to all the other Democratic measures Bob Dole celebrated in his farewell-to-the-Senate address. The new agenda gives Republicans a way to be squishy and lovable and still right-wing. Very often it increases the amount of money spent on anti-poverty efforts while ensuring the money is spent on faith-based charities, private schools, and other institutions conservatives actually approve of.

But the Republican change of emphasis also illustrates more profound shortcomings in the libertarian approach to domestic policy. The libertarians are great at rebutting liberalism, but, in Harvard philosopher Harvey Mansfield's words, "They are governed by logic rather than reason. Their individualism presupposes that individuals are strong and independent, and does nothing to make them so. Libertarians rely on self-interest, as is appropriate in a liberal democracy, but they do not see that when an individual is weak, it may be in his interest to be dependent on government. They forget that self-interest, in Tocqueville's famous phrase, must be 'well understood.'"

Kent Lemon

John Kasich

Over the last decades, libertarians have mounted a devastating critique of statism and of the view that government money is the solution to domestic problems. They have focused public attention on the problem of dependency—on the way government corrupts behavior. The libertarian view is that most any government action produces moral hazard and leads ultimately to self-destructive behavior. Whether it's providing benefits to single mothers or insuring upper-middle-class people who build their vacation houses too close to the beach, government support corrupts. Charles Murray, among others, has pointed out that people are pretty good at building happy communities. If one does not exist, then the key question should be: What got in the way? More often than not, the answer is: government.

But over the past few years the debate has shifted away from perverse incentives and toward cultural explanations for poverty, crime, and other social ills. Bill Bennett sells 2.3 million copies of *The Book of Virtues*. Bob Dole doesn't talk about welfare cheats as Reagan did; he talks about the bad values being transmitted by Hollywood. Analysts like John DiIulio and Robert Rector look to religion as social policy. Nihilism is now commonly thought to be a greater menace than statism.

Some think that bad culture has been the problem all along. Others accept that many people have been corrupted by bad government incentives but then argue that simply by removing government you cannot restore people to their previous behavior. Libertarianism explains the problem but doesn't solve it. And that in fact is the lesson of the past four years of Russian history.

Many of us who hung around Russia during the collapse of communism thought that once the Party and the State got out of everybody's lives, society would recover. But we didn't assign enough importance to the urine in the hallways. Russians who lived together in an apartment building couldn't even get together to clean the hallways outside their apartment doors. The culture of trust had been destroyed. Simply removing the state wasn't going to bring it back. In retrospect, it seems obvious that Russia would be overrun by thievery and thuggery, and that it would take more than entrepreneurial spirit for the nation to recover. And the same basic lesson applies to our inner cities.

True, the civil societarians are ripe for ridicule because their language is mushy and their programs are not always hardheaded. They don't give enough emphasis to individual achievement, which is near the center of American life. But surely there is something valid in their general approach. Private schools *do* work better than public schools. Faith-based charities *do* work better than the welfare state. Surely there is something government can do to aggressively expand the institutions that work. Or at least to figure out why those programs do work so well.

Furthermore, the political reality at the moment is that American voters, while critical of some of the government programs we have, have not given up on government itself. Politicians who preach the harsh line of cut, cut, cut end up about where Phil Gramm did when he ran for president. ♦

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Haley Barbour, Riverboat Gambler

By David Grann

In the fall of 1995, when Democrats were running ads hammering Ohio Republican congressman Bob Ney for cutting Medicare, Ney cornered Republican National Committee chairman Haley Barbour and asked why the GOP hadn't countered with a blitzkrieg of its own. "Where are the RNC ads?" Ney asked.

It's too early, the Mississippian replied.

A few months later, when the AFL-CIO pummeled Illinois Republican congressman Ray LaHood with similar ads, he beseeched the RNC chairman for air cover. "We're getting Harry and Louise'd," LaHood cried, referring to the ads generated by the Health Insurance Association of America that helped sink President Clinton's health care package.

It's still too early, Barbour said.

Finally, a few weeks later, when a barrage of negative ads attacked GOP freshman Steve Chabot for raising congressional salaries in the *103rd* Congress—when Chabot hadn't even been elected yet—he couldn't take it. Standing at the House Republican Conference, Chabot yelled, "When are we going to get our message out?"

Eight months later, Republicans are still asking that question.

It's one of this season's greatest political gambles: In the age of rapid-response politics, Barbour is doing the unthinkable—lying in wait. As Democrats batter his foot soldiers, Barbour's organization is quietly stockpiling millions of dollars for an 11th-hour offensive. RNC officials estimate—with only minimal exaggeration—that Democrats and their interest groups will outspend the national committee by as much as $90 million before the August conventions, when the GOP plans its full-scale assault. "We're like Mel Gibson in *Braveheart*," says one RNC aide. "We keep telling our troops to 'hold, hold, hold.' But it isn't easy. The troops are getting restless."

Indeed they are. Following nine months of unmitigated assaults from Democrats and the unions, the 73 House Republicans who spearheaded the revolution are scurrying in panic. The GOP presidential nominee, Bob Dole, is plummeting in the polls. And for perhaps the first time since taking over the RNC in 1993, the man whom Rep. Bill Paxon once hailed as "godlike" is facing hostility within his own camp. "We made a decision a long time ago not to spend dollar for dollar with labor," Barbour says of his latest gambit. "Unlike the unions, we don't have a bottomless well of compulsory dues. I know no members like to be attacked by name in their districts. . . . I know it's frustrating for them."

Frustrating?

"We feel like we're the troops getting killed out on the fields while the lords are sitting safely in the hills," snaps Oklahoma freshman Steve Largent.

"Where's the RNC cavalry?" demands Ney.

"They were just too slow to recognize the damage being done," complains Pennsylvania representative Phil English.

"If we're supposed to be the party of the rich, then why do they seem to have all the money?" cries Rep. Mark Souder of Indiana.

"It was a strategic blunder," says Washington Rep. Jennifer Dunn.

"At some point you got to say," asserts Rep. Jack Kingston of Georgia, "if you have the weapons, load 'em and fire."

And that's just Republicans. Democrats are downright giddy. "I can see the ads playing on TV when I go door to door," crows Chabot's Democratic opponent, Mark Longabaugh. "The RNC is making a *wonderful* mistake," gloats Rep. Barney Frank of Massachusetts. And Don Sweitzer, former DNC political director, gleefully posits: "If Bob Dole goes down and Democrats regain the House, then the once-great Haley Barbour will be remembered as a failed chairman."

Nineteen ninety-six wasn't supposed to be this way. This was the year King Barbour was to acquire his crown jewel—the first GOP president and Congress in four decades—and retire happily to his home in Yazoo City, Mississippi. (Or perhaps to a nice cabinet post, like the late Ron Brown after the Clinton

David Grann is executive editor of The Hill.

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victory in 1992.) If there was anyone who seemed untouchable after 1994, it was the kid who once organized the back roads of Mississippi for Richard Nixon.

As RNC chairman, Barbour helped orchestrate the greatest Republican revival in America since the 1920s. Without a single Republican incumbent losing, and with a net gain of 59 Republican House members, 10 GOP senators, and 14 governorships, he drove his beleaguered Democratic counterpart, David Wilhelm, into exile.

While Gingrich touted the Third Wave, Barbour actually created a message machine, complete with a $2 million television studio. He established the RNC's own propaganda tank, the National Policy Forum, that steadily spread Republican ideas from Sacramento to Syracuse. And with his booming voice, bouffant hair, and salesman's smile, Barbour preached the GOP gospel in his now famous folksy soundbites:

Democrats are running like scalded dawgs.

The GOP's as strawng as an acre of garlic.

And on election night: *Boy, we're in high cotton now.*

Michael Ramirez

More valuable than his homespun spin, each of his ten stubby fingers seemed to possess its own Midas touch: He raised a record $65.8 million in 1994 and helped rescue the National Republican Congressional Committee from a staggering debt. Ironically, the man now under fire from Hill Republicans for hoarding GOP money shelled out more on a midterm election than anyone in RNC history. In a less talked-about gamble, Barbour even borrowed $5 million in the final months of the 1994 campaign to restock Republican war chests.

After the election, Paxon, the jubilant chairman of the NRCC, raved to the *National Journal*: "It isn't too much to say that he is, next to Newt Gingrich, the guy that we think is most responsible for us winning our majority." The *Economist* put it more succinctly: "Saint Haley."

Saint Haley. Now that's a cross to bear. And if Dole's weak campaign and the worrisome decline in public support for congressional Republicans do not improve, poor Barbour may soon find himself hanged upon it.

But like William Wallace, the Scottish hero played by Gibson in the epic movie *Braveheart*, Barbour hopes to keep Democratic spears just far enough from Republican hearts until the eleventh hour, when, allies say, he will unload his ammunition.

"This is his clear strategy," says Don Fierce, the RNC's director of strategic planning from 1993 to 1995. "Haley knew that simply throwing $5 million to make House members feel good wouldn't have changed public opinion." He then adds: "The real air battle will be waged from Labor Day on."

It may not be pretty. In the first six months of this year, the RNC raked in nearly $42 million in hard money—roughly $10 million more than the DNC—as well as $35 million in soft money. And in July alone it pulled in a total of $23 million, nearly double its previous monthly record.

While conserving most of this money, Barbour is quick to drawl that he has not left Republicans on the Hill totally unprotected. In May, he notes, the RNC launched a $20 million ad campaign that will run until the August conventions. Although most of that money went to bolster a bankrupt Dole campaign, other reinforcements are on the way. After months of inertia, a coalition of businesses unveiled a $1.3 million ad campaign to counter the AFL-CIO blitz. And on July 23 the NRCC undertook a $10 million TV and radio campaign that will air in at least 30 congressional districts.

But for House freshmen, the engines of the revolution, the damage may have already been done. "Quite frankly," says GOP pollster Frank Luntz, "we didn't respond. The feeling at the top was that voting decisions are made in the last 10 days. They may still be

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proven right, but I'm afraid we've lost some swing voters whose minds are made up."

And for Barbour's critics, the question remains: Where was the famed RNC cavalry nine months ago when the GOP was trying to balance the budget and Clinton was successfully, and perhaps irrevocably, tarring Republicans as extremists?

"You name it," says LaHood, "the RNC had excuses."

Bob Dole was one of them. After the costly GOP primary, Dole desperately needed a cash transfusion. Not surprisingly, the three-time presidential candidate turned to Barbour, who, like himself, had gambled his place in history on winning it all in 1996.

Barbour had guarded his war chest for just such a scenario. He quickly unleashed his $20 million worth of "issue" ads touting Dole, many doing double-duty in vulnerable House members' districts. But as Dole struggled on, some Republicans complained that Barbour was devoting too many resources to the top of the ticket. "He has completely forgotten about the real revolution," complains one hardcore freshman. "He keeps pouring Republican money into a sinking ship, while the rest of us go down with it."

Indeed, RNC aides calculate, if Dole, who is trailing Clinton by 20 points in some polls, loses by more than 7 percent, then Republicans could forfeit more houses than just the white one. A blowout in California, Washington, and Oregon alone could decapitate more than 20 House Republicans, nearly enough to

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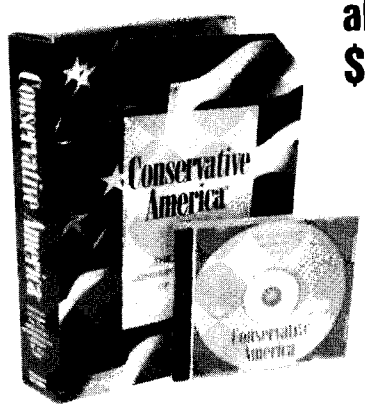

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create the once unthinkable: Speaker Gephardt.

His neck sharing the same noose as Dole's, the telegenic Barbour finds his fate intertwined with one of the most inarticulate campaigners in history. Nevertheless, the tight-lipped Kansan and easy-talking Mississippian have publicly embraced one another. Dole, who headed the Republican National Committee under President Nixon, hails Barbour as the greatest RNC chairman in history. And Barbour hails Dole, almost wistfully, as the next president of the United States.

The courtship, however, has not always been so sweet. Dole initially wanted Kentucky senator Mitch McConnell, not Barbour, to run the RNC in 1993. And despite Barbour's urging, Dole refused to sign the Contract with America, leaving the revolution to founder in the Senate.

Things sank to their nadir in December 1995 when then-Majority Leader Dole, on the advice of his chief of staff, Sheila Burke, booted Barbour from legislative strategy sessions. Normally unflappable, Barbour reportedly exploded in anger. "Everything pretty much went to hell after that," says one top House aide. "Nobody else in the room had Haley's political instincts."

What prompted the scuffle? "Dole was suspicious of someone who wasn't even a senator sitting in on legislative meetings," explains one Senate leadership aide. "He had never seen a party chairman in that capacity."

Perhaps that is because Nixon had snubbed Dole as RNC chairman at almost every turn. And so, at the most critical juncture of the Republican revolution, Barbour found himself sulking on the sidelines. Since then, aides say, the two have cooperated more closely, the stoic septuagenarian reaching out to a suddenly more patient Barbour.

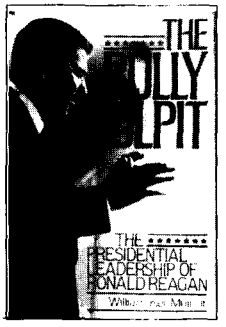
One reason is Scott Reed, Dole's campaign manager and Barbour's former chief deputy. Reed speaks almost daily to Barbour, sharing strategy and tactics. Dole and Barbour also now confer weekly. The result: When Dole decided to retire from the Senate after more than 30 years in Congress, one of five people in whom he confided was Barbour.

But pinning your dreams on Bob Dole isn't easy. Despite Barbour's coaching, Dole, in a span of four weeks, picked a fight with NBC's Katie Couric, compared smoking tobacco to drinking milk, insulted the head of the powerful Family Research Council, refused to read from a TelePrompTer, and changed his position three times on the abortion plank. "It certainly wasn't our idea to make guns, abortion, and tobacco the three pillars of our campaign," says Fierce. "That's got the freshmen spooked to high heaven, and I don't blame them. We should be talking about crime, welfare, and taxes."

Even since boycotting impromptu chats with the press, Dole remains behind. And things look as stark to some Republicans as they did during the government shutdown. "I'm not aware of a coherent coordinated strategy between the RNC, the NRCC, and the Dole campaign," says Largent. "There's been one blunder after another. Right now it's every man for himself."

Like most strategies, Barbour's is derived from the last successful war. In 1994, Republicans trounced Democrats, at least in part, by hoarding their money until the final weeks of the campaign. According to one GOP poll, more than 50 percent of the voters made up their minds during October.

But is 1994 the same as 1996? Probably not. First, labor is shelling



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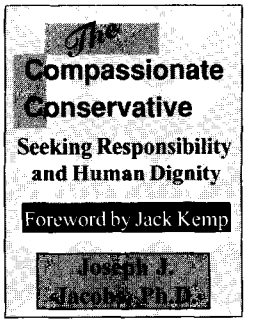

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out an unprecedented $35 million. Second, the new Republican Congress has mobilized the once-moribund Democratic base. Third, Republicans, against Barbour's initial advice, tried to curb the growth in Medicare spending. "Republicans touched the third rail and got electrocuted," says Democratic consultant Mark Mellman.

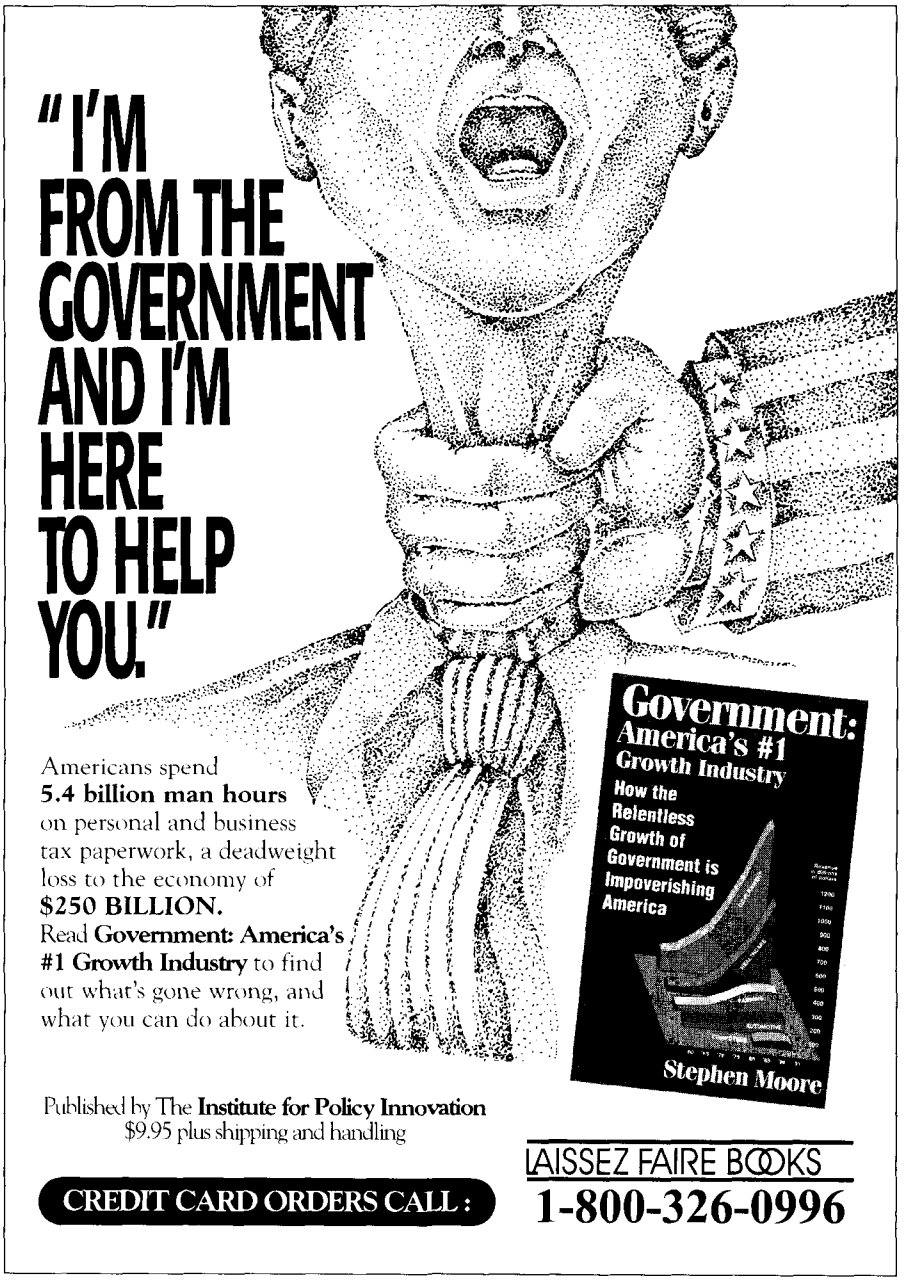
Finally, there is Barbour's newest nemesis, Dick Morris. Clinton's sometime Democratic, sometime Republican strategist is gambling that he can annihilate Republicans with an early deluge of ads. According to Bob Woodward's book, *The Choice*, the Democratic National Committee and the Clinton-Gore campaign shelled out more than $18 million on pro-Clinton ads—a figure some GOP media trackers actually estimate as high as $43 million. "He's from the bowels of hell," says Souder, who worked with Morris as an aide to Sen. Dan Coats. "He's also a genius."

Despite such odds, plenty of veteran Republicans, including Speaker Newt Gingrich, are betting on Barbour. After all, most of the RNC's critics are political novices—Largent caught footballs for a career—whom Barbour helped elect. "A lot of this is just scapegoating," says Dan Stanley, Dole's former administrative assistant. And as GOP consultant Eddie Mahe notes, "If [Barbour] ran out of money on October 15, the growling would be far more intense than it is now."

In fact, congressional Republicans are no further behind in the polls then they were at this point in 1994. Incumbent Republicans also have far larger war chests. Rep. John Ensign, who is under siege from Democratic interest groups in Nevada, has $841,000 cash on hand—more than seven times that of his expected opponent.

And despite his lead, Clinton remains vulnerable; according to a *Wall Street Journal*-NBC News poll, 63 percent of Americans doubt his honesty. "I'm happy where we're at right now," Barbour proclaims. "Republicans are likely to gain 10 seats in the House . . . and make small gains in the Senate." Indeed, the Yazoo kid may still have his crown jewel—and rank as the the greatest RNC chairman in history.

Of course, there is another possibility: Like William Wallace, Barbour may be politically disemboweled. ♦



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YOU, ME, AND CCRI: *A Letter to Colin Powell*

By Ward Connerly

August 6, 1996

DEAR GENERAL POWELL:

As I write these words, tears are flowing down the cheeks of Michael Johnson, as his lips mumble the words to the "Star-Spangled Banner." While the band plays our national anthem, the American flag is being raised in honor of Johnson's gold medal victory. A replay of the end of his competition shows him pointing to his chest, where "USA" is displayed. A few minutes ago, Carl Lewis's reaction was almost identical.

Clearly, Johnson and Lewis are proud of their individual accomplishments. They have a right to be. Yet one cannot help but recognize their national pride—pride in a nation that fostered those individual accomplishments. Just a few years ago, it would not have been "cool" for black Americans to evidence such pride in our nation. Remember the reaction of some black Americans when George Foreman waved an American flag following his gold medal ceremony?

The nation has changed. This afternoon, I purchased a paperback copy of your book, *American Journey*. Frankly, I wanted to see if you had revised pages 607 and 608 of your hardbound version, in view of the inconsistency between those pages [in which Powell criticizes preferential treatment based on race—*Ed.*] and your now-famous Bowie State University commencement address [in which Powell praised such remedies—*Ed.*]. As I strolled the aisles of the bookstore, trying to navigate a course around the endless displays of your book, I saw Denzel Washington's face on the cover of a current edition of *People* magazine and Oprah Winfrey's on *Redbook*.

These incidents illustrate how much black Americans are woven into the cloth of American life. We are no longer a vast group of outsiders looking in. Black Americans can now sing with pride, "From California to the New York Island, from the redwood forest to the Gulf Stream waters, this land was made for you and me." Things have changed so much since the days of Jim Crow.

We who have lived the black experience have changed American culture. Perhaps the most significant contribution that we have made to America is the premium which our nation places on the civil rights of all Americans. Civil rights: Those personal rights which attach to each of us as American citizens, and which are guaranteed against encroachment by our government. *Equal treatment* under the law is one of those civil rights.

Equal rights and equal opportunity, however, mean just that. They do not mean preferential treatment. You had it right in your book when you acknowledged the fundamental wrongs associated with preferential treatment based on race. The author of that book seemed to understand the unwelcome intrusion of preferential treatment, based on race, on the civil rights of Americans. You have it wrong now as you seek to rationalize preferences.

Although you "preach the American dream" in your speeches, the foundation of affirmative action preferences is a belief that America is at its core a racist society. You evidence acceptance of this belief by the examples you cite of the "consequences of being black in America." I, on the other hand, believe that Americans have a passion for fairness and that the progress this country has made over the last generation is nothing short of miraculous.

You base your position about affirmative action preferences on history during a period when Jim Crow laws systematically excluded black Americans from participation in mainstream American culture. I, on the other hand, base my position on life for black Americans in 1996, which is one of remarkable achievement based on equality of opportunity.

I do not contend that racism no longer exists in this nation. Of course it does. But we are well past the point of being helpless victims who cannot succeed without "special help" from the government. Black Americans like Johnson and Lewis are succeeding all over the country, every day, in small ways and in great.

Ward Connerly, a California businessman, is chairman of the California Civil Rights Initiative. He sent a slightly longer version of this letter last week to Gen. Powell's office in Alexandria, Va., following a correspondence between the two earlier in the summer.

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To suggest that racial preferences are necessary or desirable at this point belittles their accomplishments.

You argue that the playing field is not level. You contend that the nation should wait until "redlining" is eliminated, crime and poverty statistics are improved, and jail statistics are improved as well before black Americans are allowed to compete on an equal footing. But what playing field has ever been completely level? No matter how you divide society—Catholic vs. Protestant, northerner vs. southerner, city-dweller vs. rural resident, old vs. young—there have always been differences. Equal treatment under the law cannot wait on precise parity. The level playing field which you seek will ultimately be the product of legal equality.

You believe that affirmative action "does not lead to Balkanization." I, on the other hand, believe that it is directly responsible for the culture of self-imposed segregation—separate social groups, separate student organizations, separate student lounges, separate student dormitories, separate graduation ceremonies, and separate alumni associations—which defines many of our college campuses.

There are innocent people who are being harmed by government-sanctioned discrimination, practiced in the name of diversity and affirmative action. Under the current system of racial preferences, each and every black and Chicano/Latino applicant to the University of California at San Diego is given 300 bonus points on his or her application over Asian or white applicants regardless of individual circumstances. The son of a black four-star general would receive a preference over the daughter of an Asian dishwasher.

Proposition 209 [also known as the California Civil Rights Initiative—*Ed.*] would eliminate preferences based on race. It would allow the state to give special consideration to the economically disadvantaged. If that would disproportionately benefit blacks and Chicanos, so be it. At the same time, Proposition 209 would give non-poor blacks and Chicanos the dignity of standing on their own two feet—a right that is now being paternalistically denied them.

In a few days, you will be addressing the nation from the podium at the Republican National Convention in San Diego. As a bigger-than-life American hero, I guess you have earned the distinction implied by this engagement.

It is reasonable to speculate that you will use the occasion to tell the American people why affirmative action preferences are good for us, and I have no doubt that you will be articulate. I need not tell you that the attention which our party is visiting upon you will be invaluable to the opponents (your allies) of the California Civil Rights Initiative. Ironically, this is an initiative that is supported by about 70 percent of California Republicans.

After the cheers have faded from the convention hall in San Diego and the delegates have returned to their respective places, the people of California will still be confronted with the fundamental question of whether equal treatment for everyone or preferential treatment for some will be their policy.

You have decided to inject yourself into this public-policy discussion, which you have every right to do; however, when you decided as a resident of Virginia to use your stature to influence the outcome of a ballot initiative in California, you assumed an inherent obligation to be publicly accountable for the accuracy and consistency of your views.

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While you continue to have my deepest admiration for your contributions to our nation, I would betray my entire being if I allowed my admiration for you to deter me from candidly telling you that your position(s) about this issue is (are) inconsistent and, with respect to Proposition 209, fundamentally inaccurate. You have not served us well by your contribution to this debate.

For example, the interpretation, which you have accepted, that Proposition 209 will legalize sex discrimination has been discredited by legal and constitutional scholars throughout the nation. These scholars include Democrats and Republicans, conservatives and liberals, supporters of the initiative and opponents. Indeed, the charge has been described as "quite simply ludicrous" by a respected pro-preference journalist, and was rejected outright by a judge who recently ruled on the [proposition's] ballot label, title, and summary. You've been duped on this one, General.

Similarly, the claim that Proposition 209 will *eliminate all* affirmative action and outreach programs is, with all due respect, preposterous, and there is indisputable evidence to support my position. This measure will only eliminate those programs which discriminate against people or grant them preferential treatment on the basis of their race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin. A brief review of the text of the initiative will confirm this for you.

Years from now, you will have your memories of an adoring convention, whose delegates honored your past contributions of military service and military leadership to the nation. On the other hand, if all goes well on November 5, 1996, my children and grandchildren, and those of my fellow Californians, will have a Constitution which includes a reaffirmation of that principle which you espoused in your book: "Discrimination 'for' one group means, inevitably, discrimination 'against' another, and all discrimination is offensive."

Although I wish that historians of future generations could conclude that you and I were soldiers in the same army on this issue, history will not be so recorded, as they judge our respective positions. I must tell you, however, that I wouldn't change places with you for anything in the world. That is how secure I feel about my position and the judgment of future generations.

I wish you well, General.

Sincerely,
Ward Connerly

The Intolerance of "Tolerant" Republicans

By David Tell

Here's a simple fact you'd never know from the media coverage of the abortion controversy inside the Republican party last week: A large majority of Republicans who voted this year chose a candidate named Dole who has never parted meaningful substantive company with the pro-life movement on the issue of abortion. Dole was selected in primary elections conducted months before a compromise on Republican platform language about abortion was ever floated. The abortion language approved last week contains pretty much the same "compromise" pro-choice Republicans warmly *welcomed* when the Dole campaign initially broached the idea in early June—an expression of broad respect for Republican philosophical diversity, and nothing more.

In other words, the GOP's platform committee deliberations left the party in pretty much the same situation it's been in for 16 years. So why exactly are abortion-rights advocates so livid about the whole process? "I'm disappointed," announced New York's lieutenant governor, Betsy McCaughey. "The opposite of tolerant is intolerant." Others weren't quite so dopey about it. Sen. Olympia Snowe and governors William Weld, Pete Wilson, and Christie Todd Whitman threatened for a day or two to pursue any means necessary—including a floor fight—to modulate the platform's pro-life words. And they said they'd be doing it on behalf of . . . Bob Dole, thus echoing the

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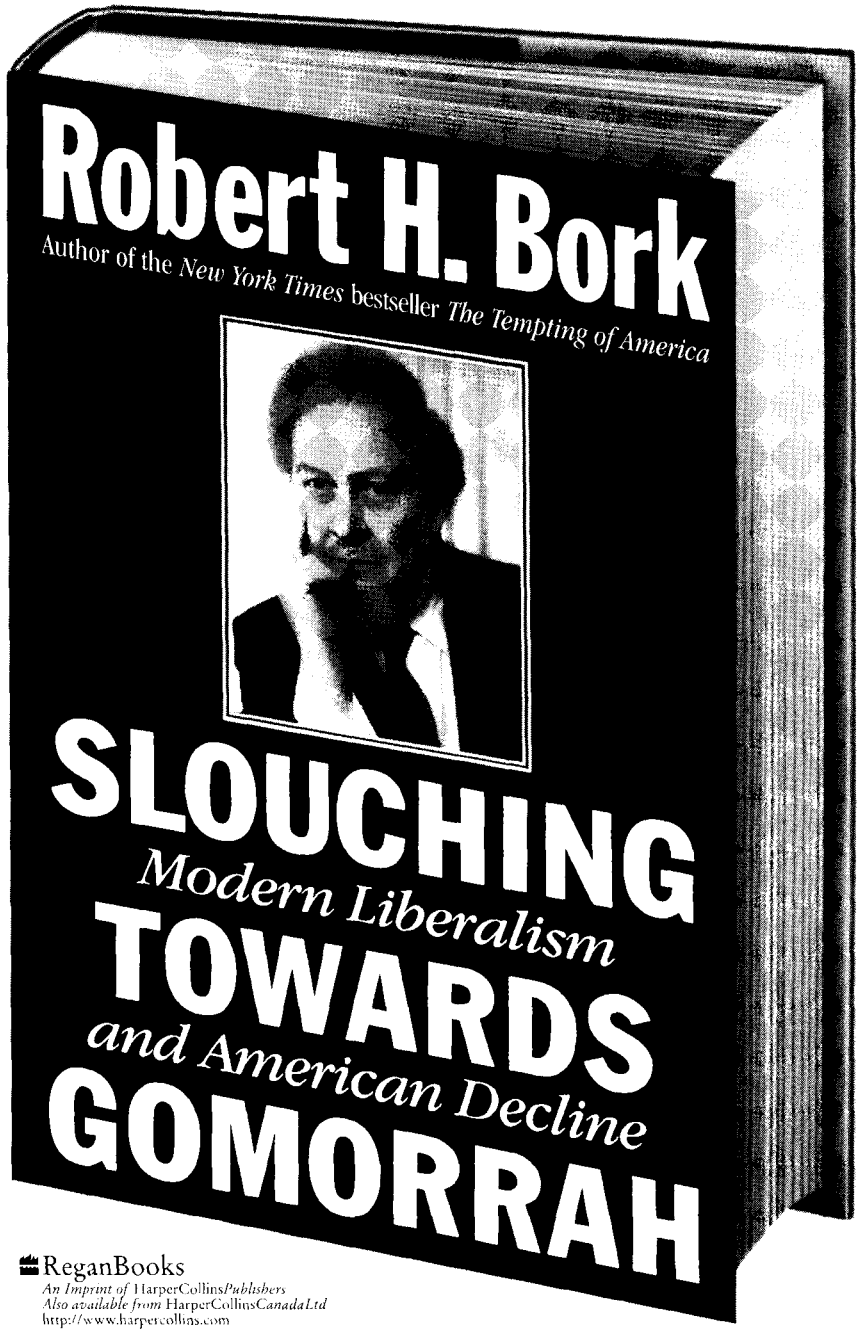
—ROBERT H. BORK,
bestselling author of
The Tempting of America



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DON'T FIDDLE WHILE ROME BURNS

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conclusion of the *New York Times* editorial page that a majority of Republicans want "a candidate brave enough to tell the [pro-life] Family Research Council that it cannot meddle in a matter that ought to be decided privately between women and their consciences."

Anne Patton is a representative of both the National Women's Political Caucus and Republican Women for Choice. On the first day of platform hearings, she happened by a solitary protester carrying a sign reading "Jesus wept" over a horrible photo of an aborted fetus. She dismissed him out of hand. "They've gone to different morgues and stuff like that, and they've blown them up so they look like full-size"—she paused—"you know." Was the picture troubling at all? "On some people it does have an effect," she said. "It doesn't have an effect on me, because I know what it is. Anything that has had surgery on it is bloody."

Kent Lemon

Christie Todd Whitman

Abortion is not a life-or-death issue, literally, for its defenders. And it is not a life-or-death issue, politically, for pro-choice Republicans. If the pro-life plank Bob Dole briefly suggested in June did not horrify them, how can a virtually identical platform explain their present anger? If abortion rights were a make-or-break issue for pro-choice Republicans, they would have left the party by now. They haven't. It isn't. There must be something else about the pro-lifery of the GOP that irritates its antagonists—not the style of moral argument that surrounds abortion, not even the moral argument *per se*. What?

The answer can be gleaned in an otherwise unremarkable puff-piece biography of Christie Whitman called *Growing Up Republican.* Author Patricia Beard opens with a description of Pontefract, the governor's ancestral "working farm" in hunt-country New Jersey. Beard drinks in the home's interior details with relish, savoring the refinement and perfection of their social signifiers. "Upholstery: faded. Wood furniture: antique, often Sheraton, and well kept." And so on.

Then Beard pursues her true purpose: a look through "the window Christie and her family open to the tradition of public service among Eastern Establishment Republicans." The family has long been defined, it turns out, by what they are not. "Extremism made them very uncomfortable." And this "extremism" still mystifies Whitman. She doubts her party's "extreme conservative positions are really about religion," she tells Beard. "People may believe that life begins at conception, although I don't hear it preached in my church, but I have to wonder. . . . It may be more like the Crusades, where people used religion to get their way."

It is the modern abortion *crusaders* Christie Whitman cannot abide, not the gist of their crusade. In her rarefied, horsey-rich world—and in most of the much larger American world of good universities and interesting professional careers—the revelation that someone who otherwise passes for normal harbors moral misgivings about abortion inspires incredulity and embarrassment. Acting on those misgivings, actual pro-life advocacy, simply isn't done. It makes one unpresentable.

The man with the fetus photo and the "Jesus wept" sign is unpresentable. The Gary Bauers and Phyllis Schlaflys and Ralph Reeds, who do not much care that the "Jesus wept" man is weird, who intuitively understand him and regard him as part of their cause—they are unpresentable, too. And they are despised for it. Especially because, unlike the "Jesus wept" man, they refuse to stay on the sidewalk. They are inside the building, out-organizing the better types who oppose them.

The August 7 *New York Times* called pro-life Republicans "pestiferous." The word was new to me, so I looked it up in Webster's. It means "bringing or carrying disease." Or, alternately, "dangerous to morals or to the welfare of society; noxious; evil." There's tolerance for you. ♦

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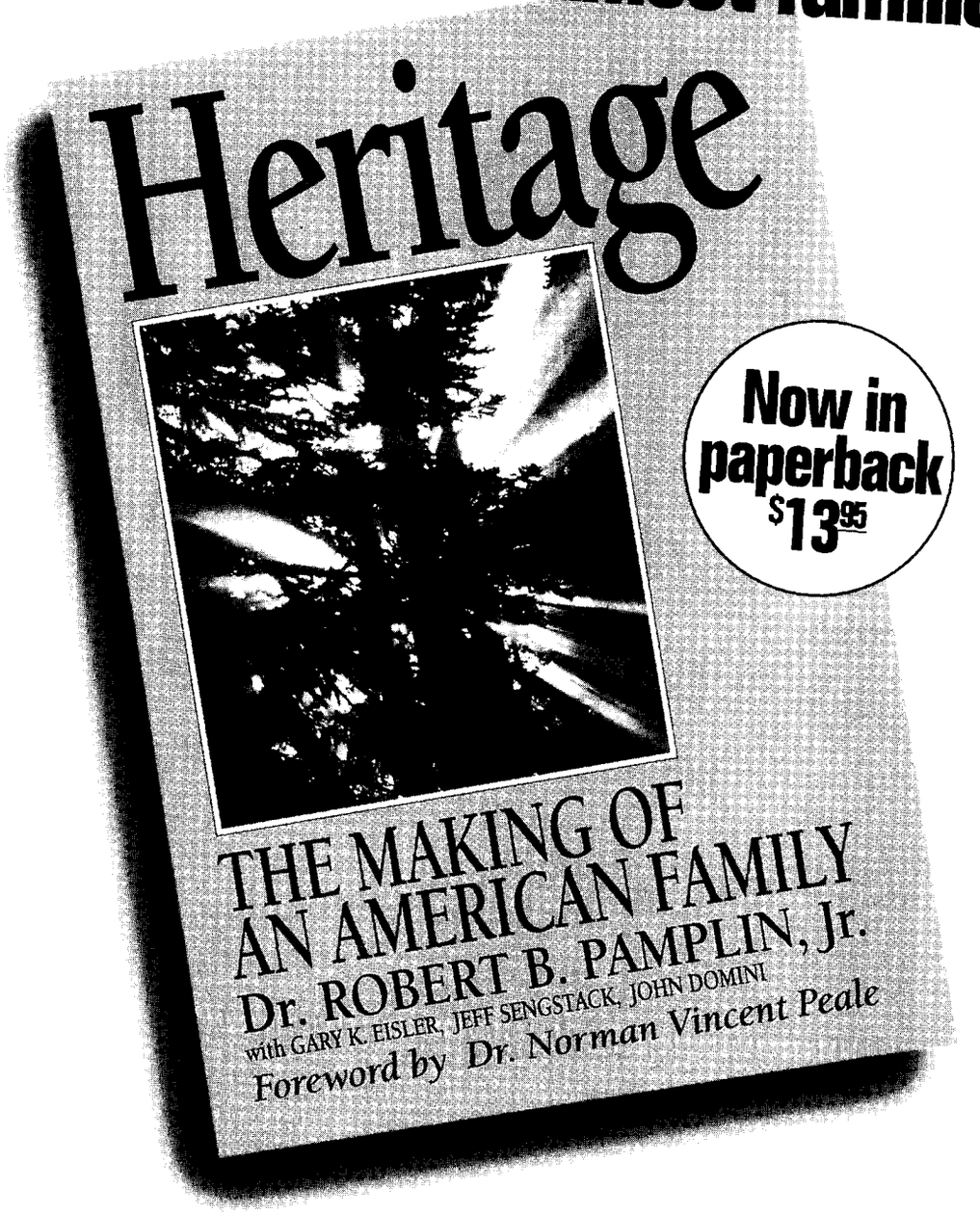

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The Battle Over "Okie from Muskogee"

By John Berlau

In 1969, two little towns came to represent two opposing cultures in America. After the counterculture held its summer festival in Woodstock, N.Y., a counter-counterculture movement was launched in the fall through the agency of a song called "Okie from Muskogee," in which the singer-songwriter Merle Haggard extolled the traditional values held dear in Muskogee, Okla. And he did it in the same in-your-face style as the war protesters. "We don't smoke marijuana in Muskogee," the song began. "And we don't take our trips on LSD/And we don't burn our draft cards down on Main Street/But we like living right and being free."

"Okie from Muskogee" transformed Haggard from a performer of semi-autobiographical country songs about prison into a musical spokesman for the Silent Majority. The "Okie" album went gold, a rarity in country music in those days, Haggard's concert fee tripled to $10,000 a night, and he began bringing in $1 million a year in gross income. When he sang "Okie" at concerts, audiences would get almost as excited as the crowd at Woodstock. "They are on their feet, berserk, waving flags and stomping and whistling and cheering, joining in on the chorus," Paul Hemphill wrote in a 1971 article in the *Atlantic* about the reaction to the number at a concert in Dayton. "For those brief bombastic moments, the majority isn't silent anymore."

John Berlau is a policy analyst at Consumer Alert, a Washington-based free-market consumer group.

After "Okie" was released, Richard Nixon wrote Haggard an appreciative letter and invited him to perform at the White House several times, including on his wife Pat's birthday. "Tonight was the Merle Haggard 'Evening at the White House,'" reads an entry from H.R. Haldeman's diary in 1973. "The 'Evening' was pretty much a flop because the audience had no appreciation for country/western music and there wasn't much rapport, except when Haggard did his 'Okie from Muskogee' . . . which everybody responded to very favorably, of course." Ronald Reagan, then California's governor, granted a pardon to Haggard in 1972 for the attempted-burglary conviction that sent the Bakersfield native to San Quentin for three years in the late 50s.

IN AN EFFORT TO CLAIM MERLE HAGGARD AS ONE OF THEIR OWN, CRITICS NOW ARGUE HIS MOST FAMOUS SONG WAS A LIGHT SATIRE OF MIDDLE AMERICA.

Recently, Haggard has been the subject of adoring attention from music critics on the occasion of the release of a four-CD box set of his life's work. And in an effort to claim Haggard as one of their own, some of these critics are arguing that Nixon, Reagan, and the song's fans in middle America missed its deeper meaning. "Okie from Muskogee," they say, was intended as a light satire of provincialism, and its audience just didn't get it.

In his review of the box set, *Rolling Stone*'s Mark Kemp showers Haggard with flattering clichés usually reserved for alternative rock artists. His songs, Kemp writes, are filled with "blunt honesty, simmering passion, and existential angst that flow like blood, sweat, and tears throughout this prolific catalog." In her new book *Songs of Life: The Meaning of Country Music*, Jennifer Lawler attempts to develop a "new critical perspective" to "show that country music is not for dummies" and "to show the degree of sophistication and intelligence necessary for both writing and understanding country music lyrics." According to Lawler, most "Okie" fans lacked the sophistication necessary to comprehend Haggard's deeper meaning. "While the song represents a very conservative point of view, with a speaker who is proud of Muskogee," she writes, "it is supposed to be a wry and ironic commentary on the nature of these conservative people in this small town who are unthinkingly jingoistic."

Even writers more sympathetic to country music's fans assert that "Okie" wasn't meant to be taken literally. "He wrote a song as a lark, kind of a gentle joke, and he became the biggest star in country music," writes Paul Kingsbury, editor of the *Journal of Country Music*, in the book *The Grand Ole Opry History of Country Music*. Similarly, the editors of *Country Music* magazine describe "Okie" in the 500-

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page *Illustrated History of Country Music* as "the infamous hippie-baiting song which he claimed to have written as a joke."

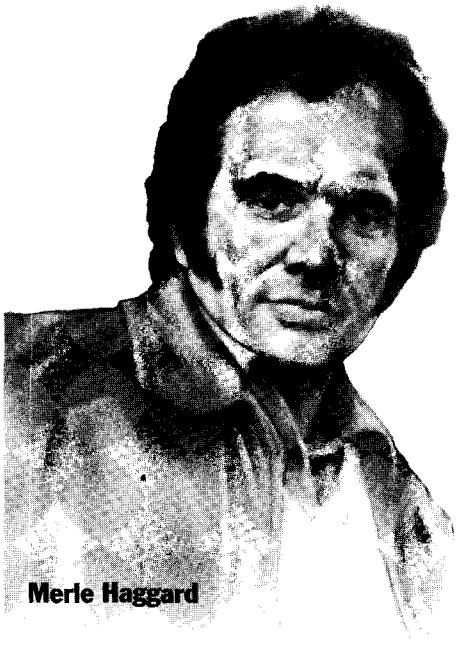
Now, strong disagreements about the meaning of song lyrics are nothing new, and this isn't the first time politics has entered the debate. During the 1984 presidential campaign, there was an ideological war over the Bruce Springsteen song "Born in the U.S.A." The Right said it celebrated patriotism; the Left said it was about the woes of working-class America. (The Left was in the right on this one.)

But the "Okie" dispute is unusual in that Haggard's lyrics are very straightforward, and when the song came out there was little argument about its message. Most liberals at the time agreed that it promoted conservative values and hated it for that reason. "Songs like Okie are a comforting musical antidote to student protest, black militancy and serious debate on the war," lamented Paul Dickson in a 1970 article in the *Nation*. In a 1974 essay in *Harper's*, a then-liberal Florence King decried "the love-it-or-leave-it paranoia exemplified in the tuneful threats issued by Merle Haggard." Richard Goldstein, in a 1973 issue of *Mademoiselle*, said, "There is something utterly sinister about the image of Richard Nixon inviting Merle Haggard to sing at the White House."

Lawler acknowledges this even as she dismisses the meaning of the liberal assault on "Okie from Muskogee": "The way the song was embraced by conservatives and rejected by liberals, each of whom took the message literally, overshadows its actual point." So what is the song's actual point?

"Okie from Muskogee" did have somewhat casual origins. When Haggard and his band were riding in their bus through Oklahoma, someone noticed a road sign giving directions to the town of Muskogee and remarked, "I bet they don't smoke marijuana in Muskogee." Haggard and the boys kept shouting lines back and forth about what small-town life must be like in Muskogee without hippies, drugs, and riots, and pretty soon they had the beginnings of a song.

But did Haggard ever say "Okie" was in jest? A quote unearthed by Tom Roland's *Billboard Book of Number One Country Hits* puts his views in context. The song "started as a joke," Merle explained to a reporter from the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* in the 80s, "but it only lasted about three seconds before we realized the importance of it."


Merle Haggard

Chas Fagan

Haggard also told the *Village Voice*'s Nat Hentoff that "Okie" was a tribute to people like Haggard's father, who hailed from the Oklahoma town of Checotah, about 20 miles south of Muskogee. "My father came from the area, worked hard on his farm, was proud of it and got called white trash once he took to the road as an Okie," he said. "Listen to that line: 'I'm proud to be an Okie from Muskogee.' Nobody had ever said that before in a song." Haggard explained to Tom Roland that "the main message in Muskogee was pride, and the patriotism was evident."

Many other Haggard songs also celebrate patriotism and the virtues of the straight life. In "The Fightin' Side of Me," the follow-up to "Okie," he sent an even more direct message to the hippies. He didn't mind the protesters "standin' up for the things they believe in," he sang, but he issued this stern warning about the limits of his tolerance: "When you're runnin' down our country, hoss, you're walkin' on the fightin' side of me."

Although some of Haggard's new fans claim he wrote "Fightin' Side of Me" mostly because he was under pressure from the record company to capitalize on the success of "Okie," Haggard still stands by the song's lyrics. He told Roland: "I'm not saying you can't stand up and say what you believe in. That's one of the most important rights we have, and that's what *I'm* doing. But I am saying—and I am attacking—anything that might destroy democracy. If we hadn't defended our way of living, our American way of life, in the past—well, there wouldn't be anything to tear up today."

The revisionists don't even address the conservative sentiments in many other Haggard songs. In "I Wonder If They Ever Think of Me," a prisoner of war in Vietnam proclaims that he's "still proud to be a part of Uncle Sam" and places the blame for his sad predicament solely on the North Vietnamese. In "Are the Good Times Really Over (I Wish a Buck Was Still Silver)," Merle exhorts everyone to "stand up for the flag" and waxes nostalgic about the "politically incorrect" days "when a

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man could still work and still would" and "a girl could still cook and still would." And after the Supreme Court ruled in 1989 that flag burning was constitutionally protected speech, Merle filed a bitter dissent with "Me and Crippled Soldiers": "For all the wars we fought and won, to keep old glory wavin'/Today they ruled to burn old glory down/And only me and crippled soldiers give a damn."

Some admirers acknowledge that Haggard holds some conservative views but insist his work is fraught with "contradictions." *Rolling Stone's* Kemp writes that "for every flag-waving single like 'Okie' or 'The Fightin' Side of Me,' Hag threw an impassioned curveball such as 'Irma Jackson,' a plea for tolerance of interracial love. Such discrepancies don't so much point to the disparities in his worldview as they reveal the more complex tug of war going on inside his soul."

What "discrepancies"? What "tug of war"? Does Kemp really believe it is a contradiction to support both patriotism and tolerance of interracial relationships?

In a similar vein, country music historian Bill Malone, a professor of history at Tulane, writes in the liner notes of the Smithsonian Institution's official collection of country music that "the smashing success of Merle Haggard's 'Okie from Muskogee' . . . cast him in the undeserved role of right-winger" because it "overshadowed his sensitive statements about working class life, such as 'Mama's Hungry Eyes.'"

Malone, Kemp, and the revisionists all share the conviction that Haggard doesn't "deserve" to be labeled a right-winger because, after all, who would believe that a right-winger could write songs that are so sensitive to the poor and to victims of prejudice? Paul Hemphill, one of the first writers to try to distance Haggard from his conservatism, lamented in his 1971 *Atlantic* article that "'Okie' and 'Fightin' Side' came along precisely when students and rock musicians were beginning to picture Haggard as a potential Woody Guthrie of the seventies—a raw Populist tale-spinner more concerned with singing honest songs than with cutting

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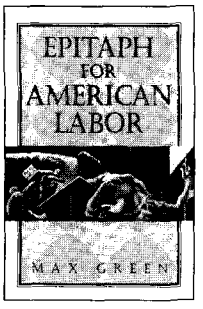

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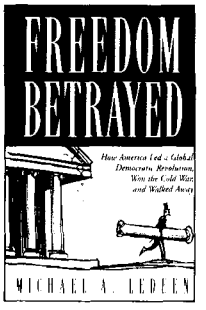

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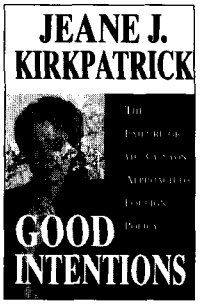

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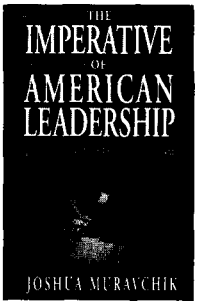

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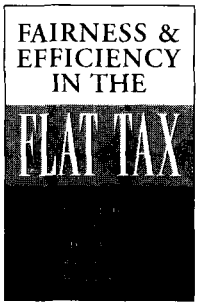

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gold records—but the two new songs blew it for them."

Haggard has always been a fascinating figure to some members of the counterculture attracted to his early life as a rambler and prisoner. The Grateful Dead covered "Mama Tried," in which the narrator sings of running away from home "on a freight train leavin' town, not knowin' where I'm bound." In the chorus, Haggard sings what has become one of the most famous lines in country music: "I turned 21 in prison doin' life without parole." The prisoner, like Haggard himself, came "from a family meek and mild" and had a father who died while he was a child. But while Haggard may view the prisoner with some sympathy, he never tries to make excuses for what he did. The prisoner takes full responsibility for his actions and does not blame his misdeeds on anyone but himself. "Mama tried to raise me better," the prisoner reflects, "but her pleading I denied. That leaves only me to blame, 'cause Mama tried."

Haggard has also been compared to John Steinbeck for the vivid images he evokes of the working class and poverty. These are subjects he knows firsthand: Like the Joads in Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, the Haggards fled Oklahoma during the Depression to find a better life in California. When Haggard was born near Bakersfield in 1937, three years after the move, his family was living in a converted railroad boxcar.

Haggard does have a gift for writing songs about working people and their struggles to make ends meet. But it is untrue to say, as *Rolling Stone*'s Kemp does, that these songs are full of "existential angst"—at least not in the way the word "angst" is used today to describe the songs of Nirvana and other whiny musical artists. Most of the people Haggard writes about do not complain, try to make the best of what they have, and don't give up easily no matter what life throws at them. He may be what observers call "the poet of the common man," but as Malone points out in *Country Music U.S.A.*, "Haggard's common man is a middle-class worker who, while sometimes unemployed as in 'If We Make It Through December,' works hard, drinks beer, rejects welfare, takes a dim view of reformers, and supports his country right or wrong."

In "Workin' Man Blues," for instance, a blue-collar worker who has nine children ponders "leaving, . . . throw[ing] my bills out the window [and] catch[ing] a train to another town," but quickly puts the thought out of his mind when he remembers, "gotta buy my kids a new pair of shoes." The working man also proudly declares his self-reliance when he sings, "I ain't never been on welfare, that's one place I won't be."

IS IT REALLY A CONTRADICTION TO SUPPORT BOTH PATRIOTISM AND TOLERANCE OF INTERRACIAL RELATIONSHIPS?

Similarly, "Hungry Eyes," which Malone and other critics refer to as Haggard's most sensitive statement about poverty, is moving precisely because the character's father works so hard to "feed my mama's hungry eyes" and does not wallow in his angst while working in a labor camp during the Depression. The sadness evoked by the song comes from the determination of the father to give his wife and family a better way of life and his ultimate failure—despite his success in putting food on the table—to give his wife the luxuries she quietly longs for in her "hungry eyes."

In both "Workin' Man Blues" and "Hungry Eyes," we sympathize with the characters because they have earned our respect through their virtues of pride and perseverance. "I think a lot of our country's problems boil down to attitude," Haggard told *Music City News* in 1982, when the country was going through a recession and Reagan had been in office for a year. "What I mean by attitude is that if 75 percent of the American public believed in Reagan's economic plan, it would work. But, on the other hand, if America sits on its rear and says, 'Hey you're full of crap,' then it's not gonna work for sure."

In this way, if in no other, Haggard fits perfectly the definition of a conservative offered in Russell Kirk's *Enemies of the Permanent Things*: "He neither denounces convention and conformity indiscriminately, nor defends every popular fashion of the evanescent hour. What he respects is a sound conformity to abiding principle and a healthy convention which keeps the knife from our throats."

The career of Merle Haggard brings to mind a perceptive insight of music journalist Peter Guralnick, who complained of "the tendency . . . to equate political 'correctness,' or liberalism, with musical adventurousness." Haggard is a direct refutation of this belief, because his conservatism has been the source of his musical adventurousness—he has remained an interesting and powerful songwriter because he respects and pays attention to the jazz, blues, and country artists who came before him.

You don't have to be a conservative to be a fan of Merle Haggard. That is, in part, what the new flush of attention to him demonstrates. But you do have to understand *his* conservatism to understand the interplay of his music, his lyrics, and his life. ♦

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Movies

A TIME TO *SCHVITZ*

By John Podhoretz

From the commercials, you might think the hit screen version of John Grisham's first novel, *A Time to Kill*, is about the trial of a black man who shot and killed the two rednecks who raped his ten-year-old daughter. Actually, it's about air conditioning. Or, more precisely, the lack of air conditioning.

People in this movie fan themselves madly as sweat glistens prettily from every inch of visible skin (including cleavage, needless to say) and spreads photogenically across men's dress shirts and tank tops. *A Time to Kill* is a courtroom drama set in the Deep South, and have you ever heard of a courtroom melodrama set in the Deep South where people aren't *schvitzing* like pigs?

A Time to Kill is a ripoff of *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Inherit the Wind*, two southern courtroom melodramas set in the first half of this century. Their movie versions, made in 1962 and 1960 respectively, accurately captured a time in the South when there really *was* no air conditioning, men wore bright white suits, and people carried hand fans. By contrast, *A Time to Kill* is nominally set in the present day—though we only know it's the present because the movie's leading man, Matthew McConaughey, drives around in a Saab convertible with the top down (despite the fact that he supposedly has no money and even a lousy Yugo has an air conditioner). But director Joel Schumacher and screenwriter Akiva Goldsman simply were not going to be denied their right to perspiration.

Or denied their right to portray the Deep South of the present day as a nest of Klansmen. The hidden message of *A Time to Kill* is that nobody in Mississippi owns an air conditioner because the state's residents spend all their money on expensive Ku Klux Klan gear. Judging from what we see on screen, it's especially fun to be the Kleagle, because while rank-and-file Klan have to wear a white get-up (attractive, if severe), the Kleagle gets to walk the runway in a really fabulous red satin number that looks utterly *divine*. Our hero, McConaughey, is not a Klansman; actually, he's the lawyer for the family man (Samuel L. Jackson) who killed his daughter's rapists. McConaughey seems like a decent guy; he is getting paid little money for defending Jackson and refuses to give up the case even after the Klan burns his house down and drives his wife and child into hiding. But don't be fooled, because, as Samuel L. Jackson explains in a jailhouse speech the night before McConaughey must deliver his summation, McConaughey is a Klansman *at heart*. "You're my secret weapon," Jackson says, "because you're one of them. You're the enemy."

Sean Delonas

Matthew McConaughey

This is one of three dozen occasions during the course of *A Time to Kill* when McConaughey stands mute as another cast member berates him. First, his wife (Ashley Judd) gives him the standard wife-in-a-movie speech about how he cares more about his clients than his own family. Then, his secretary (Brenda Fricker) scolds him for ignoring his other clients and putting her in danger. Then a law student (Sandra Bullock) upbraids him for supporting the death penalty. Then his drunken former boss (Donald Sutherland) gives him a lecture about how he needs to be a better lawyer.

We are meant to understand that because of all this moral instruction, McConaughey gives a really moving summation in which he cries and thereby gets Samuel L. Jackson off. I would cry too if I got yelled at constantly (especially if I were a pretty good guy and exceptionally cute, like McConaughey).

John Grisham turned *A Time to Kill*, his favorite among his own books, over to Schumacher and Goldsman because he liked the way they realized the film version of his novel *The Client*. He was right about *The Client*. Schumacher and Goldsman took a potboiler with a ludicrous premise and turned it into a terrific and amazingly believable movie. In *A Time to Kill*, however, Schumacher and Goldsman have taken Grisham's only halfway decent book and turned it into campy junk. ♦

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Parody

Robert D. Novak

Dole's Martian Chronicle

SAN DIEGO—Republicans are holding their breath, wondering what Bob Dole will say in his acceptance speech Thursday night about the subject that is slicing the party in two: life on Mars.

He's getting conflicting advice about how to handle the ticklish issue from his advisers, friends, and former colleagues in the Senate. "We need to reach out to Martians," said one aide close to Dole. "We believe Mars might be a crucial swing planet." Members of the "reach-out" camp are proposing that the platform be amended to feature language "tolerating a diversity of views and life forms within the Republican party."

Pro-immigration forces and free traders agree. Jack Kemp is proposing a 15 percent flat tax for Mars. "Mars seems lifeless," Kemp told us, "but that can only be because a capital-gains rate has really choked off the entrepreneurial spirit there." The Wall Street Journal's influential editorial page this week endorsed expanding the North American Free Trade Agreement to the planet.

But if all this happens, large segments of the party are vowing to walk. Pat Buchanan is gaining increasing support among delegates for his proposal to build a 93-million-mile-high wall to keep Martians out of the upper atmosphere. Rep. Elton Gallegly has already introduced legislation to deny Martians welfare or education benefits. And there's one man who is really keeping a close eye on things: H. Ross Perot. In a supersecret meeting with Dole campaign janitor Ernesto Rijos, supply-side guru Jude Wanniski warned, "This could really give Perot his issue for 1996."

What will Dole do? The notoriously hard-to-read presumptive nominee is still working on his speech with novelist Mark Helprin, and political writers are furiously combing the pages of Helprin's novels to glean clues to the speechwriter's mind. One of them was trying to plow through Helprin's most recent book, "Memoir from Antproof Case." "It's about some guy in Brazil who hates coffee," one reporter groused. "What is that supposed to mean?"

It's anybody's guess, but Dole has very little room to misstep, especially since Bill Clinton has already paid a presidential visit to the Martian microbes and said he found them almost as attractive as the Incan mummy he wanted to date. Once again, the communicator in the White House has a step up on the taciturn septuagenarian from Kansas.

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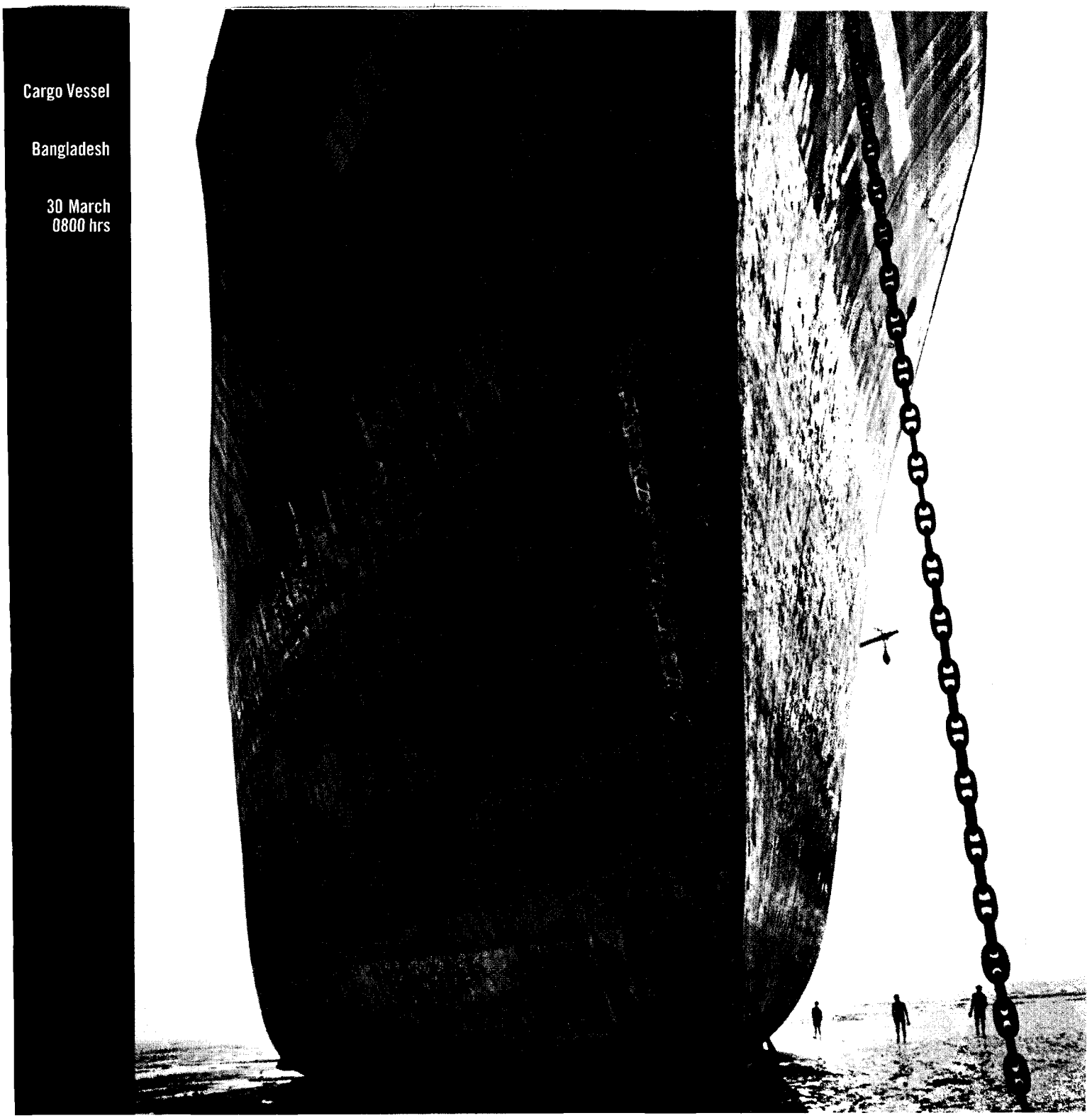

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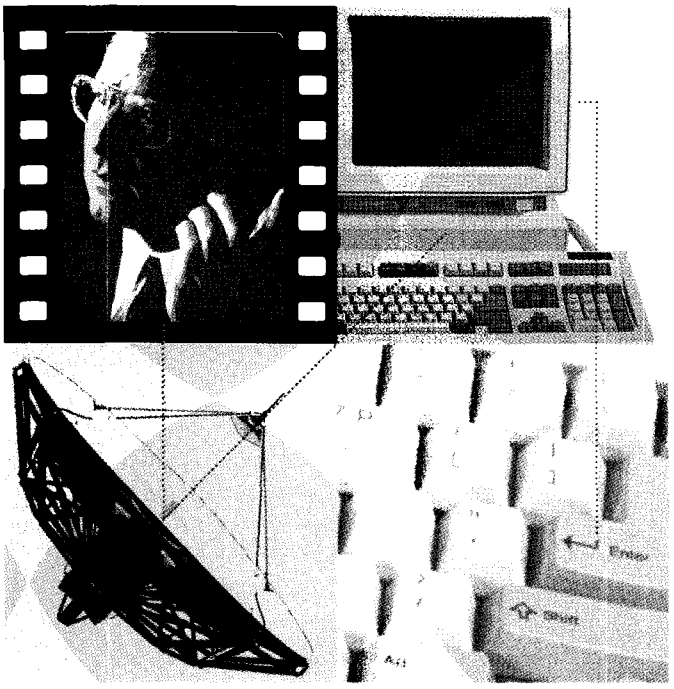

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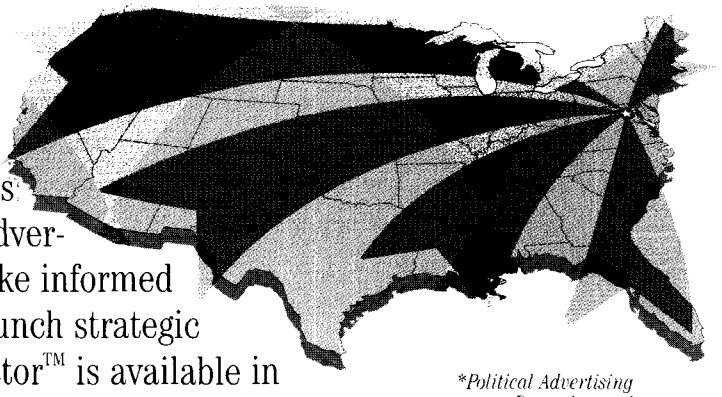

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